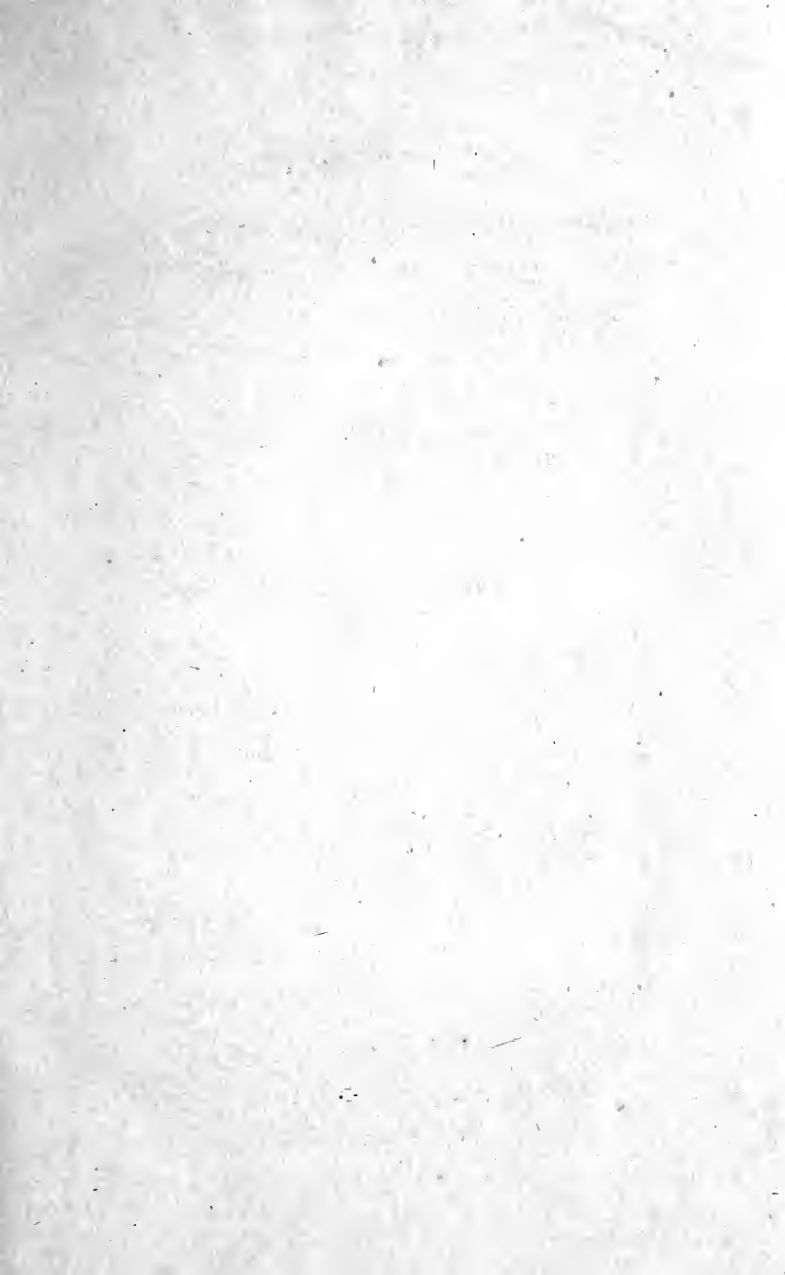






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THE INTRIGUERS:

OR,

PEVENSEL.

A ROMANCE OF THE BARONS' WAR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

EDWARD TURNER.

VOL. I.

LONDON :
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PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH the following narrative is placed in an age somewhat remote, it is desired to avoid a repetition of those acts of gallantry by which the knights of yore gained mortal combats, and won tender hearts by their agency. It is rather the present object to portray the intrigues and customs characteristic of a time which has been described by a great historian as sterile and obscure, but one in which the national character of the English people began to exhibit its peculiarities both as regards politics and manners.

Though far from extinct, the age of exclusive feudalism was just on the wane. The Barons naturally regarded with great jealousy any alliance with inferiors hitherto despised, though often superior in intellect—a remark rendered the more essential when the hero of the following tale is selected from a class treated with contempt for some two centuries; the result of former

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conquest more than any absolute inferiority. It must also be understood that the real origin of this adventurer is supposed to be designedly concealed under an assumed name. He must not be confounded with the Sontforts of ancient Norman extraction.

The trials that befel the fair heroine are portrayed as an attempt to describe the perils endured by many a young lady in a time of lawless disorganization ;—a time when many sought a temporary refuge in religious houses, only to find themselves betrayed to relentless pursuers, and, in some instances, they fled to the deeper seclusion of the Welsh mountains.

With due regard to the chronological order of events extending over a memorable period of some two years, no effort has been spared to render that variety and interest demanded by a work of fiction ; and while taken from an important crisis in this country's progress, the main features of this work of fancy refer chiefly to the vicissitudes in domestic life, at an epoch deeply affected by startling occurrences that agitated the whole political world ; when encroachments of the Church of Rome threatened to absorb an undue share of worldly treasure, shortly afterwards checked by the

celebrated statute of Mortmain; and when the impotence of a feeble government revived the spirit of rapacity and licentiousness practised by the Norman nobility in the days of Stephen and Richard the First.

The realities of historical fact are employed at their proper time and place, so far as they influenced the stirring incidents of a plot and the motives of its principal characters. So, however great its defects, the course of this narrative will be easily followed without any irksome research into bygone times. Sufficient information is interspersed in a concise and intelligible form.



THE INTRIGUERS:

OR,

PEVENSEL.

CHAPTER I.

“The negligence, the apathy, the evils of sensual sloth, produce ten thousand tyrants, whose delegated cruelty surpasses the worst acts of one energetic master, however harsh and hard in his own bearing.”

BYRON—*Sardanapalus*, Act. i., Scene 2.

THROUGH the length and breadth of happy England, probably no spot has witnessed events more justly entitled to enduring notoriety than those flat lands in the eastern division of the

County of Sussex, which, bounded west by the Southdown hills, extend their level surface towards the ancient Cinque Port of Hastings. Here, it is believed by many, the Roman soldiers made some of their earliest incursions into this country, which so greatly promoted the civilization of its semi-barbarous inhabitants. It is also more than likely that many rude and savage encounters subsequently took place between the Saxons and Danes for possession of the land.

Scarcely, however, will it permit of dispute, that the greatest and most lasting fame attached to this interesting locality was afforded by the landing of William the Conqueror, and the decisive contest which soon followed, resulting in the total defeat and death of the Saxon King Harold. The scene of this important struggle was near the village of Battle, where an abbey was erected in commemoration of numerous brave and stout-hearted men slain on the field; solemn masses echoing through its sacred walls for the repose of their immortal souls.

Since these important occurrences, the neighbouring coast has much varied in aspect ; but among the historic relics of which this country is justly proud, there exists at the present day the beautiful ruin of Pevensey, about three miles north of the fashionable town of Eastbourne. Styled by the Normans “Pevensel,” it formerly stood on the brink of the sea, now, about a mile inland, its leaf-clothed walls encompass seven acres of ground.

The early history of this fortress is somewhat lost in obscurity, nor is it our present purpose to unravel the mystery. It is probably of Roman origin, though first mentioned in olden record at a far subsequent date, when given by Berodaldus to the Abbey of St. Denis, about the year seven hundred and ninety-two. The attack made by the forces of William Rufus against Robert, Earl of Montaigne, who had taken part in an insurrection, promoted jointly with Odo, Earl of Kent, on behalf of Robert Curtoase, is one early circumstance recorded concerning this powerful

stronghold, the castle immediately surrendering without serious bloodshed. Further research for any transactions of momentous import brings to light a memorable period of English history in the reign of Henry III., a time of strife and convulsion, during which our story is presumed to have been enacted.

This vacillating monarch, though possessed of great virtues, was totally unfit for his position. Leaning on the judgments of others, he was easily led by every fresh adviser, until he appeared to have no mind of his own, the real government being entrusted to successive favourites, who mostly sought to enrich themselves by acts of violence, exciting the disgust, and almost universal discontent of all classes.

To such an extent had dissatisfaction gained ground, that the King found it expedient to form a new constitution. Twenty-four Barons, under these arrangements, obtained the almost unlimited control of the State, although professing but temporary authority. This faction was headed

by Simon de Mountfort, Earl of Leicester, a most remarkable man of his time, who falling into dissensions with his associates, became, for a short interval, a voluntary exile, while his ultimate object was to usurp the full and uncontrolled power of Government by raising a strong party of supporters.

Hence arose the complications which aroused the energies of Prince Edward, son of King Henry, more especially when the arrogant demands of the faction required that their power should extend through the subsequent reign. That excellent Prince, afterwards one of England's greatest monarchs, took up arms to resist such an unreasonable proposal; but we desist from any consideration of events which immediately followed during this unsettled reign, in order to pursue the thread of our story, from whence they will be readily gathered.

CHAPTER II.

. . . . "But think how many in this hour of tempest shiver beneath the biting wind and heavy rain, whose every drop bows them down nearer earth, which hath no chamber for them save beneath *her surface*."

BYRON'S *Werner*, Act i, Scene 1.

DURING the excitement of unhappy commotions, a horseman was entering the flat lands around Pevensel, his efforts to reach the Castle before nightfall already frustrated by the nearly impassable condition of the country. Flurried agitation characterised his whole demeanour, denoting the importance of an errand involving great personal risk. Anxiety was depicted on his youthful brow. A deeply rooted apprehension penetrated the inmost recesses of his heart,

while a violent storm of arrowy sleet, hurtling across the broad levels, added difficulty to a dangerous undertaking. The steed, usually spirited, was much overtaxed, absolutely refusing to face the fearful gusts of wind, despite repeated applications of whip and spur, with a like indifference to any milder expedient.

In the progress of this journey, the worthy young man had not only refused solicitations from many a comely landlord, but even the proffered hospitality of friends, with whom he exchanged but a hasty greeting. So intent on the one object, the accomplishment of which was to all appearance defeated by the fury of the elements, when a distance of two or three miles would reach the destination eagerly desired.

This circumstance was considered by the traveller as foreboding some dire misfortune. When slacking the rein, for no other course remained in his dilemma, the noble horse, which had borne him through many dangers, was permitted to pursue whatever direction it pleased. After pro-

ceeding some little distance eastward, the young man began to indulge an idea of comfortable repose at an excellent inn, in the Port of Hastings, all hope of reaching Pevensel that night being of necessity abandoned. Soon the roar of the sea was distinctly heard mingling with the boisterous wind. The steed at once changed its course, carrying the rider some few miles into an open country, the above-mentioned town being left on his right, totally invisible in the still blackening darkness of the tempest.

Our horseman's situation was becoming critical, his limbs nearly benumbed with cold, and the exhausted animal evidently unable to carry him beyond a few more paces. In this extremity he arrived at a small hovel of the meanest aspect, and determined to implore shelter for the night, leaving the completion of his journey until the earliest return of daylight. The door of this miserable hut was speedily opened by a man, who, although clothed in the coarsest habiliments, was of a superior stamp, one you would little expect to

find housed in so miserable an abode. Short in stature, he possessed the flaxen hair and blue eyes of the Saxon, his countenance, betraying an inward sense of great suffering. It clearly denoted some cruel oppression to which he had been subject. Dejected in condition, he had little to fear even from an inveterate foe; therefore he at once addressed the wayfarer in the following language:—

“You have chosen an ugly night for your journey, and in these troubled times I fear it is for no good purpose; but whoever thou art, accept the humble shelter of my hovel, though food it is not in my power to afford thee.”

Descending quickly, while the horse was secured to the branch of a wide spreading oak, our traveller entered the hut of this stranger, almost breathless from the force of the wind, which prevented an earlier expression of his thanks. This accomplished in a few brief words—

“You are,” said the new comer, “mistaken in

supposing the hour of my journey a matter of choice. I am but endeavouring to dispel a hovering storm, calculated to produce deep disaster even to future ages, while that now raging around will pass away in a few hours from the memory of mankind."

"You speak," replied the stranger, "as a true man, and fain would I believe you numbered among the adherents of our Prince. But it is beyond mistake, not a wild fancy of my troubled brain, Walter Sandford is now before my eyes."

The embarrassment of Sandford, when his name was pronounced, was by no means slight. Knowing that the Earl of Leicester was collecting forces in small detachments, he stood in imminent peril. His lofty spirit forbad any attempt at denial, so after pausing for a short time, the stranger, who perceived his emotion, again broke silence.

"You need not," he continued, "be under any apprehension at this moment. Though unable to serve my King with the ability you so happily

possess, I am as zealous in my loyalty to his cause. But mark me, the partizans of the Earl are collecting vast supplies by levy of contributions from the unhappy inhabitants of this locality ; many have they reduced to utter beggary and starvation, myself one of their numerous victims. Tell me, however, what brings you again into Sussex, like a wandering knight, through this tempestuous weather ?”

“ To obtain for my Prince the information you give,” rejoined Sandford, “ answers one object that I have sincerely at heart. Others are deeply hidden in my own bosom ; every hour’s delay fills me with unbearable suspense.”

“ I will not,” said the stranger, “ inquire further into their purport ; “rest your wearied frame on yonder rushes, that you may be better able to pursue them in a manner consistent with their urgency.”

Before complying with this request, the traveller repeatedly pressed the mysterious stranger to disclose his name and former history.

On both points he obstinately refused to be communicative; neither was any further light ever thrown on this extraordinary circumstance. Sandford once revisited the spot hoping to gather some particulars, but the hut was no longer in existence, and the strange man gone.

The almost bare ground, which served for the floor of the temporary lodging, afforded but little repose to our jaded traveller. A rotten thatch forming the roof, gave but slender protection from the pelting rain; still freedom, in the cottage of a friend, is better than captivity in the stronghold of an enemy; and Sandford's heart overflowed with thankfulness when he reflected on the numerous dangers so lately escaped. With returning daylight, he bade the stranger a hearty farewell, and arrived at the town of Hastings without encountering any further difficulty.

The inn at which he alighted was held by a host of known loyalty, who at once conducted the guest into an apartment where burning logs

imparted warmth to his chilled frame. A wide spreading table, decked with every choice meat the country could afford, proved a welcome attraction; but we must leave our worthy friend for a few moments, partaking of this goodly repast. And drinking deep from a huge tankard of ale placed at his side by an attendant, his thoughts wandered to Pevensel, and to the fair lady who dwelt within its stalwart walls.

CHAPTER III.

“ Our souls at least congenial meet,
Nor can thy lot my rank disgrace,
Our intercourse is not less sweet,
Since worth of rank supplies the place.”

BYRON.

FEW men have played their part on this world's stage with more credit than Walter Sandford. Endowed with a powerful intellect and indomitable energy, he invariably rendered valuable aid to any enterprise. The descendant of a petty franklin, he could not boast a high lineage—a circumstance which operated, in his time, as a great barrier to distinction. Entering the service of the Prince, he soon attracted notice, and was esteemed the most valuable retainer in his royal master's councils.

Previously he had been entrusted with the castle at Pevensel, as the chief officer in the absence of its lord. A fond attachment soon ripened between him and the niece of that distinguished personage, a young lady of exquisite beauty. It, as yet, lay a hidden secret on their souls, for reasons that will be better appreciated as our narrative proceeds.

During the young man's sojourn at the inn, numerous dejected men, despoiled of the inheritance of their fathers, crowded into the town, recounting sad tales of woe, their stores being carried away by unscrupulous foragers.

Shortly after, a report was circulated which raised the greatest alarm, viz., that Leicester contemplated an early attack on Pevensel, regarding it as a convenient place to receive foreign mercenaries. This filled Sandford's mind with great apprehensions concerning Lady Emmeline de Savoy, whose fate no one could predict, should the design succeed. He determined to start forthwith for the castle, but to attempt the

journey on horseback would involve the risk of capture ; so assuming a suitable disguise, he proceeded on foot with earnest haste, forgetting the danger to which he was exposed.

The strong portal of the fortress was reached about the hour of vespers, when the traveller was for a moment seized with a doubt and hesitation not usual to his nature. He felt that his intrigue with the Lady Emmeline was a violation of the confidence hitherto reposed in him, and he experienced much backwardness in encountering the lord of the castle, until a sense of coming danger recalled his former resolution. Then knocking clamorously, he was admitted by a warder, who, recognising his person, was not a little surprised at the unusual garb in which the visitor was attired. Sandford at once threw off his incognito, and entered the spacious hall, where Peter de Savoy was discussing to satisfaction a generous supper, and quaffing cups of Malmsey to loyal toasts.

“ Ah ! young man,” he exclaimed, “ what

brings you here? Is not the glitter of the royal court preferable to these dreary wastes? but welcome once more to the hospitality of Pevensel."

"Dreary wastes, indeed!" replied Sandford, "the miserable tenants of this once happy domain are little better than wandering beggars; their agonizing despair I have this day witnessed."

"Let not such melancholy thoughts possess your mind," rejoined Savoy, "we shall not fail to chastise these marauders at a convenient season."

"Away with such chiding!" cried Sandford, earnestly, "and learn what it much imports thee to know; Leicester is collecting forces to seize this castle. Heaven help us if we fall into the hands of his minions! Sit not here carousing while ruin is impending over your venerable head!"

"Mad youth!" replied the Lord, "has the vanity of princes' favour so dispelled thy senses that you come here to recount your dreamful

visions? The Earl sends me the repeated assurance of his friendship."

"Trust it not," exclaimed the youth, "his treacherous rapacity will not hesitate to sacrifice you to his nefarious purposes. It would be but one line of addition to the catalogue of his tyranny."

"Disturb not," replied Savoy, losing all patience, "this peaceful time of night with your wild imaginations—or leave my sight—I will listen no more, if you cannot converse in a manner better suiting my jovial humour."

Sandford perceived that it would be futile to pursue argument with this foolish man. Peter de Savoy's apathy to impending danger was ever too manifest, his love of ease proverbial. His pride knew no bounds, and the only anxious care he indulged was that his niece should form an alliance with some noble baron. Hastily quitting the hall, the young man went in search of Lady Emmeline. He pursued enquiries for some time before he was informed that she was in the chapel,

engaged in those devotional acts of piety, which her never-failing custom observed.

Strict adherence to instructions would prompt Sandford's return, when he had gathered full particulars of Leicester's movements, but the safety of Lady Emmeline weighed greatly on his mind, so he endeavoured to persuade himself that by remaining at Pevensel, and holding out against the Earl's forces, he might execute a diversion in the Prince's favour. Interrupted in these reflections by the lady's appearance, he was received with an affectionate welcome, which would by no means have pleased Savoy, could he have witnessed it.

"These troubled times," said Emmeline, "scarce afford you fitting occasion to leave the Prince's service. Heaven grant that I am not the innocent cause."

"I am no seeker of idle pleasure," replied Sandford. "The cause of my royal master has called me hither; his enemies gather round him like swarming bees. Danger is even hanging

o'er this castle, of which I have in vain attempted to make your uncle sensible."

"No danger will arouse his energies, unless immediately imminent," said the lady. "Do not, I implore you, withhold it from me."

Emmeline listened with manifest anxiety, while Sandford uttered the following words:—

"While deluding your uncle with protestations of friendship, the Earl is contemplating an attack on this fortress. I tremble at the thought of your misery, should you fall into the power of his brutal followers."

"Leave that," cried Emmeline, with emotion, "to the great Disposer of all things. It will little forward their purpose to wreak vengeance on a weak and forlorn girl. Return at once to the councils of your Prince, who will need all the help your energies can afford."

"It is useless to rush on certain captivity," rejoined the young man. "I remain to defend this fortress to the last extremity. Is it possible to revive Savoy's slumbering spirit, fain would I

rush into his presence, and pouring out the tale of our love and affection, claim a right to protect you; the outburst of his temper might awaken some latent faculty of his mind.”

The utterance of this resolution caused Emmeline to pause for a few moments, but continuing, she reasoned in the following manner with great earnestness :—

“The path of duty is always open when affection is stifled in our breasts. In vain might we urge the consummation of our mutual desire. Your virtues and the accomplishments of your genius, my uncle would treat with sullen indifference—rank alone would flatter the vanity of his soul.”

Impulsive passion was not common to Sandford's nature. A little consideration soon convinced him that it was not desirable to widen the breach between himself and the noble Lord. He soon regained his self-control, replying in a calm and placid voice—

“Let us, then, not delay the preparations for defence; use every effort to convince your uncle

of his peril, every moment but increases the difficulty of our situation."

"Our men at arms are numerous," rejoined Emmeline, "my presence will infuse fresh courage into their hearts, but they will need direction. Retire now to your rest, and fear not, for the cause of the just—but quick, away! I hear my uncle's footstep."

The meditations of the various members of this household that night formed a striking contrast. Sandford contemplated the best means of strengthening the most easily assailable points of the fortress. Emmeline thoughtfully considered by what means she could satisfy her uncle of impending danger, interrupted by the loud laughter of merry men retiring from their evening pastimes. The noble lord reclines on a couch with contented mind; having the favour of the King, and empty promises of Leicester's friendship, he vainly imagined that nothing could arise to disturb his peace. We must for the present leave him to enjoy this happy state of *otium cum dignitate*.

CHAPTER IV

“The cause of Heaven your zeal demands.”

A LEVEL spot of ground, about two miles from the Castle of Pevensel, is a scene of active and laborious preparation. The numerous bodies of the Earl's levies are receiving instruction in the art of warfare, and developing their muscular frames with manly exercises. Others mounted on spirited chargers, whose necks were ornamented with jingling bells, tilt with lances at a figure, which on receiving the thrust resents the outrage, endeavouring to strike the intruder with a bag of sand, attached to its arm. Among the spectators was no less a personage than the Earl

of Leicester, his eagle eye scanning the movements of his followers.

This remarkable nobleman, not destitute of good qualities nor intellect superior to the rudeness of feudal ages, bore the aspect of a man whose soul was swollen with ambitious conceptions. Beside him stood Rochfort de Vere, a knight of stern and vigorous appearance; who, determined on the accomplishment of some preconceived idea, conversed with the Earl in a manner marked by the great earnestness which both displayed, though their objects were very diverse.

A third person, the Prior of Dunsmore, was no unimportant addition to the conference. Having partaken of the hospitality of the Castle, he was present at the disagreement of Sandford and Savoy, also in full knowledge of the attachment between that young man and Emmeline, whose conversation he overheard.

These circumstances had just been recounted by this worthy ecclesiastic to the two eager

listeners. Rochfort was urging an immediate attack on Pevensel, more for the purpose of carrying out his selfish design; viz., to possess himself of Lady Emmeline by force if needful, which plan Leicester had not been unwilling to promote, when a messenger placed a written scroll in the hands of the Earl.

“I fear,” he said, after perusing the document, “we must for the present leave Savoy to his meditations; my immediate presence is required in London, whence the Prince is marching with numerous followers.”

“Let not,” replied Rochfort, “such eager haste overcome your resolution. Savoy is so incredulous of our intention that the Castle would be an easy prey to a sudden attack. Nay, my retainers shall not follow you one step until the fortress is won.”

“Peace to your brawling,” retorted the Earl, “and forget not the justice of our righteous cause through your licentious desires. Let this worthy father return to Savoy, and informing him

of his niece's intrigue, urge her removal to Dunsmore. Our power once established we will soon compel a compliance with your desires."

"Such a plan would at once command my allegiance," replied Rochfort, "but where shall the mercenaries now arriving be received, and will this holy man acquiesce in our design?"

"The Port of Hastings," rejoined the Earl, "will provide good landing for our foreign levies. A little license in those acts of piracy now pursued by the inhabitants with such unbridled energy would soon secure their favour, while the help of this holy man would be willingly afforded if a bountiful contribution is a consequent sequence."

"It is the desire of my heart to serve my liege," said the Prior, "but the contribution is a pressing necessity to satisfy the just demands of his Holiness."

It may be necessary to remark that during the reign of Henry III., the power of the papacy in this country was probably greater than at any

other period of English history. Not content with imposition of Peter's Pence, unlimited demands, without the King's consent, were made on both clergy and laity, against the customs and privileges of the realm, reducing the former to the greatest extremity, in order to satisfy the requirements of the infallible Father of the Church. The Prior was, therefore, a ready listener to any plan which would assist in the way of contribution, and involve a further sum for pardon and indulgence when the business was concluded. Possession of this young heiress presented to his mind a fruitful source for future exactions. Nor was Leicester's motive for conciliating Rochfort less apparent; a great struggle was pending; to obtain the necessary support, the renowned son of the mighty conqueror of the Albigenses was as profuse in his promises as he was backward in their performance, when the reins of government had passed into his hands.

“Eager avarice,” said Rochfort to the Prior,

“will but prejudice your ultimate reward; our arms triumphant, my coffers will be enriched by the forfeiture of some fair barony, no trifling share will be your portion.”

“My service is ever at your commands,” said the Prior, submissively; “but the demands of our Holy Father are immediate and peremptory.”

“Waste not,” said Leicester, “these precious moments with idle words. Take the amount of your pressing needs, and retrace your steps back to Pevensel. Pride will soon prompt Savoy to a ready compliance with your suggestions, but fail not to warn him of our displeasure by continuing to harbour that plebeian spy, who yet eludes our vigilance.”

“Leave the issue to me, and he will not do so long,” replied Rochfort; “my retainers following my liege, I will find concealment for a small detachment. It will require but little of the Prior’s persuasive power to induce this stripling to accompany the lady on her journey, which he

must be led to believe is solely for her greater security; at once then we should have him in our grasp."

"Your sagacity has at length prompted the right direction of your energies," said the Earl. "I myself depart to London with a sufficient band of retainers; the rest of our forces will march forthwith to Fletching. There you will assume the lead, when your immediate design is accomplished, and await our further commands."

A slight bow of acquiescence was the answer to these positive directions. Rochfort desired to maintain the closest friendship of the Earl, trusting that a good share of the spoils would be an immediate result, should the Earl succeed in establishing his power.

The course of action being determined upon, Simon de Mountfort, of all men whose deeds are rendered famous in British history, was the least likely to delay prompt execution of his decisions. The demands of the Prior were soon satisfied from proceeds of acts of piracy, perpetrated by

the agents of Rochfort de Vere in the port of Hastings. These lawless practices were carried on at the Cinque Ports about this time to an alarming extent. Even when Leicester attained the full zenith of his authority, they were continued with the same license, without respect of persons. A striking instance is afforded by the following circumstance:—The Pope, inclined strongly to the cause of King Henry, despatched Cardinal Guido to England with instructions to excommunicate Leicester and his associates. Meeting in France the Bishops of London, Winchester and Worcester, the Cardinal commanded them to carry the Pope's bull to this country, which after pressure they were reluctantly compelled to do. When the prelates arrived off the coast of England, they were boarded by the piratical inhabitants of the Cinque Ports, unceremoniously plundered, and the Pope's bull, in the confusion, consigned to the great deep. Only one point was yet undecided, how to dispose of Sandford should their effort for his capture

prove a success? The King excited the jealousy of the Barons by furnishing the castles he obtained with arms and ammunition. Leicester seized many fortified places, for, after many changes, a strong adherent of the Barons was appointed constable of Dover Castle, which stronghold all considered a suitable place for the confinement of our young hero, until Rochfort's intrigue was fully completed.

These preliminary arrangements concluded, an order was speedily issued for the march. The Earl was not slow to impress on his followers the favourite theme, that the cause in which they were about to fight was justice, religion, and liberty. Never were men's hearts more fully impressed with this sentiment, when, to the call of the hoarse trumpet, they assembled with a rapidity and precision which spoke highly for the discipline already attained.

“Sound an alarm, your silver trumpets sound,
And call the brave and only brave around,
Who listeth follow to the field again,
Justice with courage is a thousand men.”

For some miles round the polished mail of many a noble knight was visible in the bright rays of the morning sun, while waving banners added lustre and brilliancy to a scene which, watched narrowly from the distant castle, filled its various inmates with surprise and consternation, raising numerous speculations as to the ultimate intention of themovement.

The evening had already somewhat advanced before the last of these warriors disappeared. Rochfort, determined to secure the fair lady at once if possible, soon found suitable cover for the small band who were to remain in ambush; nor did he fail to communicate its whereabouts to the Prior. Leicester was rapidly proceeding by forced marches to the great city, while the holy man remained solitary on the spot which had just witnessed such an impressive display of martial power. The surrounding country restored to its usual state of tranquillity, save the dismal tolling of the distant curfew, he slowly

wended his way back to the noble castle, intent only on various plans of avarice and gain, which might be extracted from the sinister undertaking wherein he was to play so distinguished a part.

CHAPTER V.

“And fiends might pity what I feel,
To know that thou art lost for ever.”

To indulge in taunt and sarcasm is an innate weakness of man's nature. Danger for the moment averted is seldom recognised as a warning against greater disaster, when the dark clouds of impending peril are apparently dispelled by the light breeze of security and comfort.

It may easily be premised that Savoy, when the Earl's forces had departed, was not sparing of his taunts upon Sandford for having, to all appearance, raised unnecessary alarm. Little did he imagine that, at the very moment, Leicester

might be meditating his future destruction. But, to the more thoughtful mind of the young man, this movement was full of importance, foretelling the early occurrence of some startling event. It required a full exercise of his self-control to restrain the expression of his resentment, when taxed with neglect of duty by not returning, in obedience to the Prince's commands, and with some hidden motive for prolonging his stay. A serious altercation might have resulted, had not Savoy been interrupted by the arrival of the worthy Prior of Dunsmore, who was received with the welcome due to so distinguished a guest.

“What brings you back to waste more precious moments of your godly life?” said Savoy. “By the Eagle of Pevensel, I could but believe you had engaged as Chaplain to my Lord of Leicester. He will need many indulgences and absolutions for his acts of plunder.”

“Heaven forbid!” replied the Prior; “my Lord is too deep an enemy to Mother Church to

receive the benefit of our holy pardon. It is to serve my liege that I return once more to claim his hospitality."

"Good Father," said Sandford, "may the words of your mouth prove an echo of your heart's sentiments. My Lord, by gesture, offers the freedom of his castle before it is asked, and, doubtless, your reverence will do ample justice to its wine cellar. But, in heaven's name, tell us what occasions this sudden change of policy in the Earl's enterprise?"

"Good youth," replied the Prior, "I am not the Earl's Father Confessor, that I should be admitted into the secrets of his crimes. If his word is reliable, the Prince's march on London, is the pretence for a delay of his wicked purpose. To siege this noble estate is his ultimate intention."

"Go to—" rejoined Savoy, still incredulous; "here is another dreamer, whose vain alarms would again disturb the repose of my weary soul."

“ If self-security,” continued the Prior, “ will not move my liege’s spirit, let me implore consideration for the fair lady’s safety, whose graceful presence ever lends a charm this noble castle could not otherwise possess. In order to ensure the benefit of his support, the Earl has engaged to betray your niece into the grasp of Rochfort de Vere.”

There are few persons whose energies have utterly flagged. Almost everyone possesses some limit of endurance, which at last reached, the ire of their soul is forthwith aroused. Men of this stamp often prove the most determined when once their latent spirit is inflamed. Such was the case with Savoy ; the Prior had touched the most tender cord of the noble Lord’s heart. He cut short the dialogue, and gave way to an outburst of passion that resounded through the spacious hall.

“ To that dastard knight, whose vile minions plunder my fair domains—whose castle is nothing but a sink of licentious indulgence, and a

nest of thieves. My old arm shall yet wield the sword until the cause of our Royal Prince is triumphant, and his audacious enemies trampled into the dust."

"Suffer not," said Sanford, endeavouring to soothe his rage, "such anger to prejudice your calmer judgment; we must prepare to fight to the last extremity, but first let us consider some immediate measure for the lady's safety."

"May it please my liege," said the Prior. "I would suggest that for a time the lady should seek a safe retreat with the sisters of Dunsmore. The sanctity of its sacred walls will afford a reliable shelter until this tyranny be overpassed; and this young man, anxious to return to the Prince's council, would have a safe convoy by proceeding with us, during the most hazardous part of the journey, disguised as one of the attendants."

This sinister suggestion was thrown in at a moment so opportune that it needed no further argument to carry conviction. The arrangement

was forthwith concluded, and Sandford, with an eagerness which might have raised Savoy's suspicion, undertook to inform Emmeline, who, doubtless, would readily acquiesce in any project he might deem most advisable. Quitting the hall with zealous haste, he was narrowly eyed by the cunning Prior.

Left alone with the noble Lord, this holy man, now all his objects were attained, deemed it unadvisable to provoke any further disturbance by exposing the true state of affairs between Sandford and Emmeline. It better suited his immediate purpose to throw off the diplomatist and play the beggar.

"May I presume to urge," he said, "upon my noble Lord the deep requirements of the Priory, through just and positive demands of our Holy Father?"

"With all my heart," rejoined Savoy, promptly. "Even larger sums would fail to requite the service you are about to render."

Such was Savoy's enthusiasm at the moment,

that he would have granted almost any request the Prior might make; while the godly man was sorely vexed through the unhappy oversight he committed in not assessing the contribution at a far larger sum.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the satisfaction of Sandford's heart, when at last Savoy's spirit was awakened even to martial energy, and, as he believed, a safe measure was devised for Emmeline's protection. That estimable lady spent the greater part of a most trying night in prayer and supplication to the God of battles, imploring protection for her beloved guardian, and the sincere friend on whom her soul could but fondly dote. It was a sore trial to separate, even for a brief interval, from all that were dear to her youthful heart, when in such times of turbulence no human conception was able to foretell whether they would again meet, save in the heavenly mansions of eternal bliss. Relieved by the womanly tear which trickled down her lovely cheek, she sunk into a placid repose. Many

restless minutes called back the recollection of former years, when for the first time she was to leave a beloved home, associated with her bright and early joys.

Nothing disturbed the fair lady's rest but the sonorous snoring of the old Prior in an adjoining apartment. He had not omitted to safely secure the money bags containing the contributions skilfully extorted from both Rochfort de Vere, and his deadly foe Savoy. Collectively they would afford the means of compliance to the inordinate demands made by the successor of St. Peter.

The following day was spent in preparation. No light task for a lady departing on a journey extending over three days, which all can easily appreciate who have witnessed a lady's preparation at the present day for a railway trip occupying the same number of hours. On the next morning Emmeline took the hasty leave of her guardian which her feelings only permitted, and sallied forth from the portal, accompanied by the

Prior, Sandford, and a few attendants, to the sincere grief of all the inmates of the Castle, who ever felt a charm and joy from the lady's smiles that now they could never experience.

Proceeding on well caparisoned chargers about six miles, they came to an orchard tipped with the radiant beauty of nature's spring. Then suddenly they were surrounded by a band of armed men, who demanded their names and destination; amongst them was the massive form and forbidding countenance of Rochfort de Vere.

Sandford, unable to restrain his emotion, at first contemplated a courageous resistance, but the overpowering number of the assailants rendered it apparent that such an effort would be worse than useless. He then demanded in the Prince's name a safe conduct for the lady, who, trembling with terror, was supported by her holy betrayer. In reply, Rochfort de Vere taunted the young man with attempting escape in the disguise of a menial; then exulting in the possession of the fair lady on such easy terms, told

the gallant youth that it must be deemed an act of mercy if the halter or the axe was not his fate. No time was allowed for further discussion, numerous guards forcibly hurried our hero away, utterly confounded and amazed by the sudden blow.

Whether Sandford, in the course of these transactions, had exercised the penetration which usually characterized his daily acts, or had omitted the ordinary precautions that such dangerous times would prompt, his future career will afford the best opportunity for judgment. At fearful cost he had gained a bitter lesson of experience, which he long remembered. His confidence in the old ecclesiastic was severely shaken, when before his eyes the beloved lady fell into the grasp of that licentious villain both he and Savoy had so greatly dreaded. With no possible means of communicating his disaster to the Prince, on the success of whose arms he could alone hope for the desired release; perhaps for months, no prospect of ascertaining the fate of

Lady Emmeline, or even sending intelligence of her miserable condition to the Lord of Pevensel, his faculties seemed paralysed with terrible realities. Engrossed with these agitating thoughts, he did not once endeavour to form a conjecture as to his destination, until the cavalcade came in sight of the town and port of Dover. The day was fast waning, when aided by a reddened glow of the sinking sun, they ascended a nearly perpendicular steep, and attained the giddy height of the ancient Pharos.

CHAPTER VI.

“Fill, fill, till the cup runs o’er ;
He’s a King and something more
That’s fond of drinking.”

BARELY had the good citizens of London awoke from their nocturnal slumbers—the grey dawn of returning daylight shedding its first ray over old St. Paul’s—when a loud knocking was heard at the Crown Inn, then situate at the west extremity of Cheapside, in a yard of considerable dimensions. Outside stood Robert Morton, a retainer in the service of Leicester, who arrived with intelligence of the Prince’s march by Kingston through the county of Surrey.

The portly landlord opened a lattice and eyed the newly-arrived guest, whom he did not at first recognise, though a frequent visitor, possibly from the attractions of the host's pretty daughter.

"What midnight massacre have you now been perpetrating?" said John Bluff, the innkeeper. "Is not the house of Israel yet extinct?"

"I am no slayer of the tribe of Judah. Open at once to Morton, or perchance he will do so for himself. Nor will it be long before the bell of St. Paul's shall call the citizens to arms in the cause of our noble Earl."

"My concern," said Bluff, "is more with the baron of beef than the Baron of Leicester. But the door shall open; though you would have been the more welcome, had you deferred arrival for a couple of hours."

"A truce to your brawling," said Morton; "the City Militia are already called out, and your bulky form will march to the defence of liberty and justice."

"In our march to Isleworth they were but glad

to leave me on the road," answered Bluff. "But we will soon pledge the Earl's success by doing justice to a tankard of ale."

The weary messenger was glad to rest until the hour of noon approached; when, seated at a sumptuous table, together with the jovial landlord, his pretty daughter and a few citizens, the urgency of the Earl's cause was soon forgotten in the convivial humours of our worthy friend Bluff, who, possessing the qualities of the gourmand rather than the politician, was more skilled in handling the tankard than wielding the battleaxe.

Our lively host, now seated before a goodly round of beef, assumed all the bustle of importance usual to persons with whom style is not a natural accomplishment.

"My friend," he said, "I pray thee partake of the strong food which nourishes mankind, and better liquor will not be found in the City of London."

"Would that my Lord of Leicester," said Morton, "was as open-mouthed to swallow his

foes as I to devour my quota of that excellent cheer, already feasted on by our good host's eyes."

"The good man," said Bluff, "speaks truth for himself. For my part, the sight of the eye will not satisfy the cravings of the stomach; while the eyes of my worthy friend are sufficiently feasted. The fair damsel opposite will mar the tone of his appetite."

"The blush of modesty on the fair maid's cheek," said Morton, "doth outvie the ruby tint of our host's jowl reddened by copious potations of ale."

"I blush," said the maiden, "but for the dullard followers of Leicester, whose seeming wit doth far outstrip their understanding."

"Thou art a well-spoken lass," said Bluff; "the bright tint of modesty will soon give place to a more permanent hue as the cup passes round."

At this moment an attendant entered the room with the Mayor's commands that Bluff should

call out his troop of militia, while the winding of horns and galloping of horses were heard in the distance.

“Not content,” said Bluff, “with spoiling the whole tribe of Israel, my Lord would spoil a worthy citizen of his dinner. Tell him my troop shall be in good time to form the rear guard. Bring hither the wine flasks that we may make a paction with old Bacchus for our success.”

“Our good host is desirous that we should march with our heads downwards,” said Morton. “Fair damsel, it will be a wearisome season when your jovial parent is called away on war’s alarms; would that I were able to supply his place!”

“Pass the cup swiftly round,” said the damsel, “and I am in no fear for his loss. I pray thee also retire early, or we may be troubled with thy company as well.”

“My retirement is impossible while you are present,” replied Morton. “Withdraw not, or this festive scene will soon lose half its charms,

and all its recollection during the coming adventures."

"The sooner its remembrance is gone, the better, I should say," returned the girl. "Adventure will never be my lot; nothing is seen here but eating and drinking, and no diversion, save the jargon of some fool's prattle."

"Nothing but eating and drinking! By all the saints, what is life for?" roared Bluff. "What comes of an empty platter but ill-temper? and, the cup exhausted, friendship soon ends. Hush! you silly child."

"If it were so," replied Morton, "the sound of that distant trumpet would not force its unwelcome clamour upon mine ear. Come, my worthy citizen, it is now the portion of thy life to throw off the host and become the soldier."

This conversation was not got through without copious refreshers of good wine, which began to take a marked effect on our friend Bluff, who became the more indifferent to his duties as a valiant member of the City Militia. He at

length declaimed that if every man did his duty as he had done his to-day, the Earl might be sure of success ; and once more he endeavoured to pledge it in a bumper of sack.

The cup was with difficulty raised to his lips, apparently taking aim at any other feature but the mouth. The noise of numerous men now assembling was treated with sullen indifference. At last, assisted to a couch, the good citizen snored loudly, despite the clamour of trumpets and rattling of arms. Whether his troop assembled, historians fail to inform us ; but the rumour of the Earl's approach caused the other partakers in the feast to rush into the forming ranks with quickened haste, after vainly endeavouring to awaken the reposing host, who had far outstripped all opponents in the quantity of his potations, if not in zeal for the combat.

The shades of evening had almost overtaken our gallant warriors before the various detachments had crowded the narrow labyrinths of the old city. Numerous were the adieus to the

pretty daughter of our friend Bluff, the good man still enjoying his heavy sleep. It was not a little remarkable that Morton was about the last man to join the ranks, though by no means steadier for his afternoon's entertainment.

During these proceedings, the Crown yard was filling with armed citizens, summoned by the sonorous clang of the bell of St. Paul's. Its tones did not call the peaceful worshipper to his devotions; but the Cathedral yard was quickly filled with armed warriors, while Leicester conversed with John Fitz John, a strong partizan, who supplied the Earl's requirements for the enterprise by murdering a wealthy miser named Cork Ben Abraham.

"The spoil of that degenerate man, Abraham," said Leicester, "will supply the desired means. Would that the usurious old wretch was unable to tell the tale of our plunders."

"His lying tongue," said Fitz John, "will no longer utter its accustomed falsehoods. With my own hands have I cut his avaricious throat.

But should our arms succeed, what fair baronies will be spared from your eager grasp, to become my humbler share of the spoil."

"My engagements," replied Leicester, "are already deep to Rochfort de Vere. Such men we must not neglect, until our objects are gained, when we may dispense with his assistance now dearly bought with such promises."

"What licentious project occupies his corrupt mind?" said Fitz John; "but thou hast a fellow to deal with as determined and covetous as thyself."

"My covetousness will be sorely curbed to provide what your conscience will be satisfied to accept," replied Leicester; "Rochfort, to render us much service, is too intent on his unlawful design to seize the Lady Emmeline de Savoy, who is now, I hope, safe with the sisters of Dunsmore."

"The better for our purpose," said Fitz John, "he will the more readily attain his desires, while his dissolute passions will prevent the energetic exercise of his rapacious greed."

These considerations duly pondered over, the assembled citizens required the immediate attention of these two noted chiefs, who soon formed their raw troops into an appearance of marching order. They squadded awkwardly over the bridge, unconscious as to their destination. Our worthy friend Bluff was too far overcome with the indulgences of the day to afford the benefit of his assistance ; so we are debarred the pleasure of his jovial humour during the march to Fletching.

CHAPTER VII.

“Farewell! if ever fondest prayer
For others’ weal availed on high,
Mine will not all be lost on air,
But waft thy name beyond the sky.”

BYRON.

THERE is frequently an admixture of good in the evil this world contains. With all his duplicity the Prior appeared somewhat desirous of softening the blow he had been the principal means of inflicting, and a little touched at the distressed condition of Lady Emmeline, left in so critical a position, when her most reliable friend became a captive in the hands of his enemies.

Moreover, greediness of gain was rather to be attributed to necessity forced by exactions of the Court of Rome, than to any bad quality inherent to his own nature. But even in this pursuit of lucre he stood in a difficult position ; Leicester's arms successful, great hope of reward lay in lending himself to Rochfort de Vere's nefarious purposes ; but in the possible event of the Earl's cause experiencing a reverse, it was from Savoy only that he had any reliable prospect of remuneration.

The best course was to endeavour to persuade Rochfort that duty required his immediate presence elsewhere, and that his company on the journey would but raise suspicion of ultimate intentions, while he best pleased the opposite parties by ridding the fair lady from the society of a man, so utterly detested and feared. Besides, he was not without serious and well founded apprehensions that Rochfort, or some follower, might cast too longing an eye on the amply stocked money bags.

When the guard conveying Sandford to his goal of captivity disappeared in the distance, and that attention had been paid to Lady Emmeline which so startling a shock rendered imperative, Rochfort and the Prior were conversing apart from the few remaining followers.

“I implore my liege,” said the Prior, “to disarm suspicion of any sinister designs by permitting the fair lady to pursue her journey to Dunsmore alone. Besides, from persuasions of the unworthy youth, who has so justly fallen into your honourable power, Savoy contemplates at once taking up arms in favour of the King, and doubtless may intercept your necessary supplies and reinforcements arriving at Hastings.”

“The worse for him,” replied Rochfort, “he will but incur the risk of certain forfeitures, of which a considerable share will fall to my advantage. Pursue your journey at your pleasure; my fixed intention is to conduct the lady forthwith to my castle at Hurstingham.”

“I beseech my Lord,” said the Prior, “not

to forget the righteous claim of duty, nor his zeal in an honourable cause, which might be prejudiced by so hasty a determination."

"My purpose," replied Rochfort, "is deep and peremptory ; nor am I willing to be despoiled of that fair prize I have so vainly longed for. My noble overtures were treated with a disdain to which the spirit of a De Vere could never yield."

"Such a course," said the Prior, "might incur the loss of our holy father's blessing. I trust my liege will not provoke his displeasure."

"Such blessings I would willingly dispense with," retorted Rochfort. "Can the noble eagle be allured from prey fallen into its mighty grasp? Go to! Return to those religious duties too long neglected, and so essential to purify your soul from its avaricious greed."

The Prior, finding he could in no way prevail, argument serving but to harden so obdurate a man, stood transfixed to the spot, with remorse at the unhappy issue of this miserable proceed-

ing. The lady's fate he could easily conjecture, and all his hopes of future guerdon apparently vanished into thin air. The unfortunate lady, after the first outburst of grief, seemed strengthened by some invisible hand, feeling a full confidence of protection from a higher power, exceeding all succour that human might could possibly afford.

They had started but a few paces, when suddenly a clamorous sound of prancing steeds caused the earth to apparently vibrate. A numerous troop of mounted warriors halted to refresh their weary animals at a running stream, cutting off the only available retreat unbarred by densely-packed thickets of copse-wood cresting the neighbouring hillocks. Their trappings denoted adherence to the Prince. The flying banner of a noble Knight indicated the presence of some distinguished personage.

Emmeline regarded them as long as her swollen eyes would permit ; while Rochfort's countenance overspread with a deadly pallor, as

though seized with that terror common to all overtaken by sudden danger in the perpetration of some nefarious act. Assurance at length regained, it crossed his vigorous mind that the Prince must have changed his tactics, and instead of marching on London, had probably masked that great city a few miles to the west, passing through the county of Surrey into Sussex. If these conclusions were correct, to accompany the Prior, or to pursue the journey to Hurstingham, would almost with certainty expose him to the fate inflicted on the unfortunate young courtier. He compelled the remnant of his followers to seek concealment in the short brushwood at the base of the hillocks, and there waited anxiously the departure of the noble band.

The new comers remounted without observing their hidden prize, and proceeded hastily towards the Castle of Pevensel. Rochfort, calling the Prior aside, again addressed him, though in a very altered tone.

“I have,” he said, “determined for the present

to commit the lady to your charge, returning to my forces now encamped at Fletching—woe betide your holy coat if you fail me in my ultimate purpose.”

Before the Prior could reply, the Knight galloped off with his followers, leaving the holy father, Emmeline, and a few attendants sole occupiers of the ground.

Our Prior’s reliance on Rochfort’s promises were somewhat shaken, still he made considerable opposition, when Emmeline insisted that an attendant should return to Pevensel, conveying intelligence of their calamities and her escape.

The released travellers then continued their journey, each occupied with silent thoughts, rarely disturbed save by the convulsive sobs of the unhappy lady, who at last broke a prolonged silence—

“May I implore your reverence for any particulars within your knowledge concerning the fate of that excellent young man, now in the power of such merciless persecutors? Withhold

not a word, I beseech you ; blessings of heavenly grace will support me in all my afflictions."

"Fair lady," said the Prior, "be assured he will but endure a brief captivity, which all my best influence will be used to shorten."

"Then Heaven bless your holy name," replied the lady, "you shall not fail to be provided with your deep requirements, whatever fate may befall me."

Departing daylight rendered essential the choice of suitable accommodation for the night. For the purpose of better satisfying the fair lady, the Prior deemed it most advisable to seek the hospitality of some noble lord, loyal to the King. The Earl of Arundel sided with the barons in their early proceedings, more to correct abuses than from desire of subverting the powers that be, but the faction degenerating into submission to the will of Leicester, he was an unwilling party to designs deemed absolutely traitorous. This worthy noble had been engaged

in defending the Castle of Rochester against the Earl's forces, but the travellers had every reason to anticipate a welcome reception from the estimable lady, whose virtues graced his noble domain.

The towering keep of the Royal Castle, bequeathed by the renowned King Alfred to his descendant Adhelm, was already visible in the dim twilight. Our approaching travellers were eagerly watched by the noble Lady of Arundel, who, in the full reflection of the now risen moon, stood gazing thoughtfully from a lofty battlement, with anxious craving for intelligence of her noble lord. Entering the spacious portal of William the Strong, who daring to reject the fair hand of the Queen of France was caged with the roaring lion, but soon exhibited his prowess by tearing out the tongue of the king of beasts, our wayfarers received the hospitable salutation of a worthy hostess, sorely troubled at the unhappy aspect of her fairer guest.

They are ushered into an apartment of

splendour. Emmeline retired with the estimable lady of the castle, to seek the solitude of quiet repose, leaving the Prior to his meditations, and enjoying the creature comforts of life. The relief tears afford the troubled soul was exhausted, but she felt a charm in pouring forth her inward anguish to the worthy lady, whose sympathising heart was touched with womanly emotion. Weary and sad she retired to rest. Once more her lovely form is bent in prayer, imploring a watchful Providence over the adored youth, whose dire calamity she had unfortunately witnessed. With a confident hope that the evil which had befallen her would work some ultimate good, she cheerfully recognized it as the chastening hand of God's love. It was a happy frame of mind. Even the anxious suspense was endured from necessity she could but regard as a passing autumn in her life, which leading to days of wintry sorrow, would bloom in a coming spring with renewed loveliness and glee.

The Prior, impatiently waiting the return of the

Lady of Arundel, hoped to engage her in some pastime. Oppressive thoughts burdened his soul, which by this means he hoped to dispel. Through that eventful day the constant sight of Lady Emmeline's broken spirit, and contemplation of her holy resignation seemed to have stupefied his senses. He felt a terrified dismay, and grave apprehension of some impending calamity, for which he was utterly unable to account. An inward grinding of conscience was gnawing the very vital cords of his heart.

The fair hostess returning, he experienced some difficulty in an effort to assume an appearance of cheerfulness, with only partial success; trusted by the innocent heart and youthful confidence of Emmeline, he feared the suspicions of the more experienced lady, from whose society he hitherto anticipated relief. This was rendered a still more trying ordeal by the lady's conversation during the repast.

"The anxiety of my lord's absence," said the lady, "in these stirring times, has scarce

troubled my aching heart so much as the deplored anguish of that unhappy girl. Greatly do I fear that the fond youth has been betrayed by artful machinations of some designing men."

Some little time elapsed before the Prior could offer the following reply—

"I implore you to banish distressing thoughts, too long laid on my burdened soul, by the exercise of that exquisite accomplishment, which has spread my lady's fame through the length and breadth of Sussex. The prowess of that renowned giant so associated with this noble domain has even reached the retirement of Dunsmore. To celebrate his praise is doubtless a favourite theme of my lady's song, with which I am but too desirous to be favoured."

The beloved spouse of the Lord of Clun eyed the holy man with a slight glance of scrutiny, but did not hesitate compliance with his request, though averse to music characteristic of a ruder age.

“Beavis, greatest man that God e’er made,
From Sussex to Isle of Wight did wade ;
At the Castle’s portal if the stranger knocks,
This bulky man full soon the gate unlocks ;
With two hogsheads of beer, fifty stone of meat,
Was the weekly prog this giant man did eat ;
A tower was built of strength and weight,
To furnish room for his ugly pate ;
The grave to hold his form complete,
From end to end was thirty feet.”

A mound, said to be this monster’s grave, still exists, also a tower, bearing his name ; unfortunately it is only calculated for a man of ordinary dimensions, but this is unworthy of record, compared to the evidence of tradition.

Possessing, in an eminent degree, some refined qualities of the troubadour, this rude melody, although raising his curiosity, scarcely pleased the cultivated taste of the holy man, who exclaimed—

“I prithee let us permit the worthy giant’s fame to rest with his bones. Those sprightly melodies of which my lady is so apt in execution would better suit my present humour.”

“To neglect,” said the lady, “the praise of

that renowned giant, who raised the fame of this Castle, would be but base ingratitude. But, to please the refined ear of my holy father, I tune my well-strung harp to a beloved ditty of my girlhood—

“ Should my love upbraid,
Naught will I repine,
But brightly seek to charm
With happy songs divine.

“ Should my love be sad,
Soon my merry glee,
With cheerful, lively smile,
Shall cause dull thought to flee.

“ Should my love be gay,
I, with heart and soul,
Prolong the joyful hours
Till past the curfew toll.

“ Thus the live-long day
I chant my verse and rhyme,
And merry moments pass
Through all enduring time.”

“ That lively chant,” said the Prior, “ doth develope the sweetest tones of my lady’s voice. But the vesper hour is long passed, and my weary frame needs refreshing sleep.”

This diverting amusement concluded, the

Prior was desirous of retiring at the earliest moment consistent with courtesy. The lady's suspicions caused him to dread any return of conversation on the events of the day. His adieus were brief. The hours of darkness had far advanced before the inmates of the castle retired to rest, and all was hushed in the stilly calmness of a peaceful night.

Quitting this noble domain on the following day, about the hour of noontide, our travellers steadily pursued their way to a venerable city, which enjoyed a reputation of antiquity almost beyond belief, even in more credulous ages of legend and romance. Anticipating the foundation of Rome by one hundred and forty years, it witnessed the renowned deeds of King Ludor, Haus, Hudibras, and its walls were the reputed handiwork of Dunwallo Mulmutius, a cotemporary of Darius of Persia. It is much to be regretted that such wonderful occurrences were never recorded for fifteen hundred years after the worthies had passed from this mortal world. Nevertheless

suitable accommodation for the ensuing night was afforded to our jaded travellers by the city of Winchester. It had already assumed a reasonable aspect of comfort compared to the rude mud huts of ancient *Caer Gwent*.

Passing that grand sacred edifice, where for centuries the "pealing anthem has swelled the note of praise," and where the virtuous Queen Emma, to disprove the unfounded accusation of her intrigue with the worthy Bishop Alwyn, walked unscathed over nine red hot ploughshares, it was an advanced hour of the evening, considering the exigency of the times, before the travellers alighted at one of the best inns, again seeking the comfort of placid repose.

The city of the King's birth had been for some time a scene of great contention between the Royal and baronial forces. Its still disturbed state of commotion rendered the Prior desirous of quitting its ancient walls for the sanctity of *Dunsmore* at the earliest available moment.

The remainder of the journey lay through a

district of forest land where the Prior was exposed to considerable risk. At this particular period of England's history, robberies and treacheries were so prevalent, through the weakness of the King, that the nation appeared to have lost all sense of right and wrong, everyone doing as it seemed good in his own eyes. Many strong castles were but dens of thieves, and the King's own servants often confederates of the robbers. On one occasion the worthy monarch was stopped on a journey to Winchester, the baggage plundered, and his wine drunk before his very sight.

These lawless proceedings were particularly prevalent in the neighbourhood of this venerable city, from whence our travellers advanced about eight miles through a forest so dense that it was impracticable to proceed in a straight line more than a few yards. A chorus of rude voices broke the deadly silence of this wooded retreat. Speedily were they surrounded by numerous men of rough and unmistakable appearance.

A leader of this noted band pursued his avocation under pressure of necessity, when despoiled of his fair domain by the unscrupulous hand of some grasping baron. He came forward and scanned narrowly the dejected aspect of Lady Emmeline, not failing to perceive that her emotions arose more from sore trials deeply rooted in her youthful heart, than from any present dread of brutal violence.

“Fair lady!” he exclaimed, “be not apprehensive of danger which gallantry would forbid; and your holy companion can as readily pursue his journey by divesting himself of that treasure which craft will soon replace.”

“I pray thee,” said the Prior, “lay not the hand of violence on the just rights of our holy father, whose needs are pressing and peremptory.”

“The needs of the servants of God, inhabiting these forests,” said the stranger, “are as deep as the holy father’s. Follow swiftly thy dreary course, or the darkness of night will overshadow these leafy woods.”

The Prior, pale and agitated, feared to provoke further disaster by not submitting to the loss with even an assumed show of grace. Then proceeding fleetly on their lightened palfreys, the Priory was reached about the hour of twilight. Emmeline, calm and resigned in her anxious suspense, the pallid hue of her lovely features depicting emotions of inward sorrow ; while the holy man was, as yet, unenriched with means to satisfy the papal demands, notwithstanding his complete success in the skilful exercise of various little arts of chicanery.

CHAPTER VIII.

“The chilly ground contains her wasted frame,
From Heaven her spirit haunts my nightly dream ;
No more can human wish those charms reclaim
Which ever made the heart of friendship beam.”

ANONYMOUS.

THE noble Lord of Pevensel, left to solitary thought after the departure of Sandford and Emmeline, calmly considered various measures in favour of the Prince, which lay within possibility of execution. Several plans that crossed his fertile mind were speedily deemed impracticable or beyond discreet limits of prudence. At length, interrupted by a portly warder

announcing a distant movement of warlike troopers, he ascended a lofty watch tower with precipitate haste.

For some time he scanned narrowly the mysterious horsemen, who, approaching the Castle with forced speed, caused no little surprise when discerned as loyal subjects of the King. The noble lord, continuing his observation, soon recognized the banner of an aged Knight, the intimate companion of former years, and whose daughter was a constant playmate of Lady Emmeline in the earliest days of childhood, though for several years he lost sight and knowledge of these esteemed friends.

The great mass of this band were compelled to seek a rendezvous at a suitable spot about a hundred yards from the Castle-gate. The old Knight entered its massive walls, and was met by Savoy, both exhibiting a deep and visible emotion. The worthy host clearly perceived that a sorrow hung on the furrowed cheek of his noble guest. He feared some disaster even more

profound than such stirring times could possibly occasion.

After exchanging the salutations common to sincere friends long parted by the call of duty, William de Manville, the newly arrived warrior, requested a short repose, the hurry of his journey severely taxing so aged and shattered a frame. Barely had he retired with this object, when the attendant arrived whom Emmeline had despatched with intelligence of the adventure recorded in the earlier pages of our last chapter.

These particulars were duly communicated; Savoy, much affected at the fate of Sandford, whom lately he almost despised, endeavoured to persuade himself that his niece was secure from further harm, though with difficulty he drowned suspicion of unfair and hidden schemes.

Coupling these circumstances with the fact of the newly arrived reinforcements, he drew nearly those same conclusions as to the Prince's movements which had already influenced the mind of

Rochfort de Vere. Doubt was soon removed by the return of the now refreshed Knight, who at once addressed his old and valued comrade.

“The sight of these venerable walls doth awaken recollection of happier years, but I pronounce an old man’s blessing on the noble house of Petrus de Sabandia. Where is Lady Emmeline, whose childish frolics haunt my now weary sight?”

“Of her we will presently speak,” said Savoy, “it much imports me to know the meaning of your sudden appearance in this perturbed country.”

“From Nottingham,” replied De Manville, “I marched to join the standard of my Prince ; approaching London its citizens were armed in Leicester’s service, so passing by Kingston, the forces proceeded through the County of Surrey to the Castle of Lewes, from thence I pushed forward with my choicest followers, to concert with you some prompt measures for intercepting the Earl’s supplies and reinforcements.”

“We, indeed,” said Savoy, “approach some decisive issue. Already have I reason to believe that a large party of the Earl’s forces are collected at Fletching, and fain would dread that our worthy leader might be taken at an unguarded moment.”

“Thanks for your caution,” replied the Knight. “Nor will I fail to take measures to thwart the realization of so well-founded an apprehension. What means are at your disposal to assist in the execution of our purpose?”

“My men at arms are legion,” answered Savoy. “Added to those well-equipped warriors who now await your commands, we may, by a judicious distribution of our forces, readily accomplish the desired object. My retainers, well acquainted with this country, it will require no little discernment to escape their well-directed observations.”

“It is agreed; I return to Lewes,” said the Knight. “But how are matters at Rochester? Has Arundel been enabled to hold that important fortress?”

“On reliable authority,” said Savoy, “I am informed that Leicester has raised the siege; his forces will doubtless join the army at Fletching, supported by a march of the Londoners.”

“These important movements,” replied De Manville, “forbode an early struggle. We must at once prepare. My failing strength will avail little in the heat of contest, but my heart and counsel shall never lack zeal.”

“At once, then,” said Savoy, “we call our men to arms; further words are but idle delay in these desperate moments. But how, and where is Marion?”

A gloom of sadness passed over the old Knight’s face, when this magic name was pronounced. Savoy’s worst fears could little anticipate the wretched fate of that unhappy girl. The increasing distress of his aged friend told the unmistakable tale of her passage to eternal joy.

“To recount her woes,” said the Knight, “at these stirring moments would burst my aching heart, when all my nerve, and the sinew still

left in an aged frame, will be needed for the coming battle. The vision of her angelic form chanting hymns of praise will infuse new courage into my soul. Oh, righteous heaven! could it but revive my bodily strength for a few short weeks."

"Distress not your saddened heart," replied Savoy, "with vain regrets, but rather, give place to the contemplation of her happy and eternal bliss."

"Such has ever been my constant effort," said the Knight; "but now once more I ask for your fair niece. She will recall the happy hours of my beloved girl's childhood, which seem passed as a tale that is told."

"Dreading the treacheries of these disordered and licentious times," said Savoy, "I have sought protection for a short period by placing her in the holy keeping of the Sisters of Dunsmore, at the suggestion of the worthy Prior."

"What!" exclaimed De Manville, in a voice that caused Savoy to stagger backwards, "with

that vile miscreant, whom no holy coat shall protect from the vengeance of my withered hands! Fain would I tear the flesh from his hellish visage !”

“ Stay,” replied Savoy, interrupting sharply, “ belie not the holy man, whose fatherly care is now the hope of my niece’s future joy. I will not suffer his worthy motives to be questioned within these walls.”

“ Hearken unto me,” replied the aged Knight, when excess of agitation permitted ; “ the bitter trials of this transient world were softened by a beloved daughter of my loins, the comfort of my aching bosom, a very joy of my inward soul. In faded years her childish frolics beguiled the weary hours, her sweetest smiles the solace of my declining life. The music of her bright charms my followers all adored. The contemplation of her virtue might cause the very angels to rejoice. In these troubled times I deemed it but a measure of expedience that she should seek a brief retreat with the sisters of Dunsmore, when pressed by the

requirements of our holy father, whose infallible acts I will not dare to question, the Prior, for mercenary considerations, betrayed her lovely form to Rochfort de Vere, a vile and dishonourable knight. She sickened with brutal violence and disrespected virtue, and then the welcome hand of death afforded release from his villainous grasp. Oh! merciful Heaven! infuse once more the strength of youth into my aged frame, that I may rid the fair face of nature's earth from the contaminating tread of that licentious fiend."

Manly tears stole down the furrowed cheek of the aged Knight, while Savoy stood motionless, as though stunned by some thunder-bolt of heaven. The once chilled and stagnant blood boiled within the thready cords of his veins. Each breathed a silent prayer for a blessing on the arms and prowess of their noble Prince, which, if successful, they might confidently hope for a consummation of their hearts' desires. But we must now leave these worthy men to pursue their plans of warfare.

CHAPTER IX.

“ The din of battle now is heard,
Its clangs through air resound ;
To many noble warriors bold
It is a deathly sound.”

ANONYMOUS.

ON the evening following the meeting of the two noble Lords at Pevensel, the bright moon-light which illumined the path of Emmeline and the Prior to the Castle of Arundel, served to guide De Manville and the greater part of his followers on their return to Lewes, the head-quarters of the King's forces, whither they were summoned by the imminence of impending battle.

The royal army was drawn up on a hill about a mile west of the town, annually frequented at the present day by lovers of the turf. An emi-

nence, used as a beacon, retains the name of Mount Harry, and commands extensive views of the South Downs, which, though destitute in appearance to admirers of growing foliage and renascent crops, possess peculiar beauties in their bold outlines and graceful slopes, inspiring the mind with a deep sense of the grandeur of Nature's inanimate works.

The troops, regaling themselves with rattle-headed pastimes and merry songs, recounted tales of their distinguished deeds ; while conspicuous amongst a numerous retinue, mounted on a spirited charger, was the tall, commanding figure of Prince Edward, who, already on the alert, issued commands and directions for the coming struggle. The flashing fury of his eye exhibited a firmness of purpose. Gentle and benign in his demeanour with friends, he was ever the most determined of enemies. His fair and handsome countenance only prejudiced by a drooping eyelid, and engaging manners by a slight hesitation of speech.

At Fletching, about nine miles north, then surrounded by a dense forest, gathered the army of Leicester. Each man decorating his breast with a white cross, as a badge of distinction, devoted the evening to prayer; receiving the blessings and absolutions of the Bishop of Winchester. A message of conciliation despatched to the King was returned with an answer of defiance, confidence too often abused leaving no alternative but an immediate appeal to violence and the sword; the issue of which combat would determine the question of power and control in the affairs of the State; affecting, in no less a degree, the future prospects of that unhappy youth imprisoned in the fortress of Dover, and the fair lady in a still more perilous situation at Dunsmore. On the following morning the Baronial forces moved to a position west of the Royal army, the King drew his sword, crying out, "*Simon, je vous defie*;" and the fearful scene of carnage forthwith commenced.

In an age when unqualified praise was be-

stowed on undaunted strength, rather than obedience to duty, zeal was too apt to overstep the proper limits of discretion. Forgetting, in his youthful ardour, the sagacity of the general, the Prince led a furious onslaught against the unfortunate Londoners. Utterly routed and pursued for a distance of four miles, the eyes of many worthy citizens were darkened by the unsparing hand of death in its most savage form. Leicester's martial experience was not slow to take advantage of this ill-judged-division of the Royal forces; the King, vainly seeking refuge in Lewes Priory, became a captive to his enemies, while the Prince, returning from such ill-directed display of valour, was equally reduced to the necessity of compulsory surrender.

Such was the battle on Mount Harry; the noble Prince, to protect his Royal Father, became his hostage, and was committed for safe custody to the stronghold of Dover, where his gallant satellite lay maddened with suspense and anxiety, even to stupefaction and despair. The Earl,

vested with full authority, the King, now but the mere shadow of monarchy, concluded that well-known treaty commonly called the Mise of Lewes.

Whilst these arrangements were undergoing the requisite process of adjustment, a venerable knight lay wounded on the field, broken down with mental and bodily affliction. Despoiled of his helmet, white dishevelled hair bespattered with gore, and battered armour, bore witness to the gross ill-usage already experienced. Many devoted followers groaned by his side in the last agonies of expiring life; the handsome, though time-marked features of the sufferer were easily recognised as William de Manville, the esteemed friend of the lord of Pevensel.

This patriarchal warrior still in prostrate dejection, a cavalade drew up within a few feet of his dew-moistened couch, headed by a knight whose massive jaws supported a sable beard of profuse pilosity. His projecting teeth extended into that grin, a distortion natural to the expression of iniquity which o'ershadowed the re-

pulsive countenance of Rochfort de Vere. Even most brutalised and minatory in aspect, his retainers turned upon their chargers to a position of convenience, eying the expiring veteran, who, unable to raise his shattered form one inch from the ground, was supernaturally strengthened in mind by the vision of this exciting incident. In powerless agony he exclaimed against his bitter foe, while the red blood of excitement flushed his furrowed cheeks.

“Accursed wallower in the mire of iniquity, what demon of Satan hath sent you to chide my distress? If thou canst not restore my daughter, forbear from the atrocities now engrossing your degenerate mind, or thy life’s blood shall answer for those crimes, from which the deepest damnation of eternal purgatory can never purify the souls of such men of Belial.”

“Foolish dotard,” replied Rochfort, “dishonour not thy aged tongue by the utterance of such yelling jargon, but rather exercise that reason more becoming thy advanced years. Rest con-

tent that I have sufficient of the spirit of chivalry to spare the few embers of vitality yet left in thy decayed and worthless trunk."

"Vile hound," continued De Manville, "a stain to the noble order of knighthood. Oh! that the spirit of Hercules could enter my prostrate frame for a few short moments, thy debauched body should lay grovelling in the dust, from whence it was taken, to disgrace the form and fashion of the human shape."

"Concern not thyself with my crimes," said Rochfort, "but prepare to answer for thine own. If thou can'st comfort thy dying spirit, do so by the contemplation of your fair belongings forfeited to my eager prey to perpetrate those so reputed enormities on which my mind is so firmly purposed."

"Heartless murderer of my beloved child," answered De Manville, "may heaven yet spare my ancestral halls from the pollution of any child of hell bearing the odious name of De Vere. Easy is it for thy craven spirit to triumph over a

weak and fallen foe, while thy seeming prosperity will bring thee nearer to destruction both of body and soul."

"Which you will never witness," retorted Rochfort. "Were it not for departed strength, I would reduce thee to a base scullion of my household, but now thy useless carcase shall be thrown aside as carrion to the crows of the air."

With triumphant scowl the dastard knight departed, with his equally unfeeling minions, the rapidly failing power of the dying veteran rendering his renewed declamations almost inaudible.

"Oh, Heaven of Justice! is it decreed that yon incarnate villain should pass unscathed before my sight, when I lie here like the crushed reptiles that crawl upon the face of earth?"

Further cries for vengeance were smothered in the weakened voice of exhausted nature—he sinks—he sleeps—but not the sleep of soft repose, which, when the sun sinks in the far west sky, o’ertakes the frail mortals of this world. In

that cheek of pallid hue, behold the blessed peace of a weary pilgrim, whose vital spark now rests in heavenly mansions of eternity. For days his besmeared corpse lay neglected, as the perished camel in a wild and dreary desert, weltering in heated rays of the blazing sun, until consigned by rude and unceremonious hands to a huge cold grave crowded with victims of contentious strife.

“ No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him ;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest,
With his martial cloak around him.”

Burial of Sir John Moore.

Scarcely had Nature's vital spark quitted the last representative of the noble house of De Manville, when four mounted knights halted at the fatal spot to hold a brief and hastened conference, a scanty retinue of attendants only surviving the fury of recent encounters. Three of their number—Earl Warrenne, Hugh Bigot, and William de Valence—experienced and valiant warriors, appeared stricken down with terror and dismay.

The fourth—Henry de Meudon—a stripling noble of some twenty summers, assumed a more hopeful aspect, though horrified and excited by the momentous result of that eventful day. Yet, lacking the full robustness of manhood, his figure was tall and imposing. A countenance, unusually fair for one of pure Norman extraction, beamed with lively smiles of frankness and condescension. The overflowing vivacity of his animal spirits, so skilfully exercised the art of a deipnosophist, invariably proving the soul of any banquet graced by his presence ; but now, like the rolling sea in a solemn calm, every trace of cheerfulness was for a time dispelled. Whether influenced by his own sentiments, or overawed by elder and serious companions, the general bearing of his demeanour seemed to have undergone a magic transformation, which some sudden and startling occurrence would be requisite to occasion.

“ If flight,” said De Valence, “ will protect our mortal bodies, may God preserve the inheritance bequeathed by our fathers of blessed memory !”

“Suffer not,” said the junior Knight, “vain regret to possess the soul now waxed faint within you. At Hastings lives an old freeman, who, from old associations, will his vessel lend. With the assistance of this hardy seafarer, I ship to Flanders, where, informing our Royal Queen of recent disasters, we might speedily raise a well-ordered force, sufficient to retrieve our fallen fortunes.”

“The younger shoulders,” said Bigot, “would seem to carry the wiser head. Meanwhile, let us seek the shelter of Pevensel; there could we also ship for France, should need give occasion for further succour.”

“Alas!” said De Valence, “what new disaster do I now behold? The noble house of De Manville exists but in the empty records of former days. He was a noble patriot, and a sterling friend. Ever cherished in fondest memory, his deeds shall be recounted in our minstrels’ songs; but for these urgent moments, soon should his bones rest in the sepulchre of his fathers!”

In the stillness of hushed winds, they gazed

thoughtfully on the pallid features of the deceased Knight, till Warrenne broke a silence disturbed only by stifled cries of mangled humanity.

“ Comrades, the dead cannot retrieve the desolate woe of our unhappy country ; delay may but provoke greater disaster, the dire apprehension of which o’erpowers my troubled soul !”

Influenced by these considerations, they slowly pursued their dusky way in solemn gloom, enhanced by a lowering and blackened sky, overshadowed with sable clouds of night. Arrived at Pevensel, the three elder warriors entered its massive walls through a small postern, or sally port, Savoy, under similar depression, preceding them but a few minutes, after vainly searching for his aged friend. The younger Knight went his whither to the Port of Hastings, seeking concealment from his foes in the humble retreat of the old freeman, who oft conducted his father across the stormy seas. In token of early recollections of childhood, he hoped to receive the tribute of a similar service.

CHAPTER X.

“ Adieu, adieu, my native shore
Fades o’er the waters blue ;
The night winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea mew.
Yon sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight ;
Farewell awhile to him and thee,
My native land, good night.”

BYRON.—*Childe Harold.*

OWING to the placid stillness of a becalmed sea, the hours of darkness had long o’erspread the Port of Hastings, before a burly sailor, by name Peter Portevin, had safely landed from his well-trimmed argosy. He was threading his well-known course through obscure and narrow passages of the old town ; and meeting a Knight, who endeavoured to unràvel the mysteries of these

complicated windings, the agitation of the warrior's manner attracted the seaman's notice. Though oft as a child De Meudon was a familiar playmate on board the hardy man's vessel, it was no matter of surprise that he should then fail to recognise the son of an old patron, whose increased stature was almost hidden in the surrounding darkness of dusky byways.

"Goes there—Peter Portevin?" said the young Knight. "Vainly have I been seeking your snug retreat amid the contorted windings of this complicated town."

"What wandering adventurer pronounced my familiar name at this dead hour of night?" said Portevin, drawing his dirk. "If a foe I am prepared to encounter thy attack, but if a friend speak, or a ghost shall represent thy lanky and mysterious form."

"A friend, whom in childhood thou hast fondly caressed in playful hours. It is Henry de Meudon, who now claims your shelter for the night, and a safe passage to Flanders in the morning."

“To thy father’s son is my service ever at command,” replied the seaman, in startled accents, replacing his dirk. “Stand not here at this unseasonable hour. To inquire thy full purpose will to-morrow’s returning light afford more fitting opportunity. Aye! now I behold the same well remembered face, though by some inches more elevated from the ground.”

Two figures now pursued their steady way to the quaint abode of Portevin. The tall stateliness of De Meudon formed a striking contrast to the rough bluntness of his companion, whose broad and stumpy frame exhibited a pair of brawny arms, extraordinary in muscular development; a profusion of thick black curly hair well corresponded to his weather-beaten countenance. To a manliness of bearing was superadded a loquacious humour and boundless good nature, rendering him an especial favourite with the aborigines of the old Cinque Port; and although given to the perpetration of little piratical transactions, then regarded as the almost daily

business of life, the victims of his lawless proceedings he invariably treated with mercy and consideration.

But we have filled up the time requisite to bring the wayfarers to their destination—a thatched hovel of mean exterior, sundry latticed openings serving for light and ventilation. Entering its shelter with his rough and hardy host, De Meudon partook of sufficient nourishment to satisfy the cravings of a suspended appetite, and, drinking a cup of stimulant, revived his flagged and depressed spirits. He laid down on an old couch, when, in spite of a mixture of agitating passions, after the exhausting fatigues of the day, he was soon lulled into a profound repose, with looks of care unusual to his youth. The morn somewhat advanced he slowly woke from a vision of nightly dreams, the events of the previous day fleetly passing before his half-opened eyelids.

The various inmates of this remarkable household afforded curious examples to students of

human nature. The wife, a tall, gaunt, bony woman, with hard features large for her sex; the pupil of her eye small and round, coloured of the deepest jet. Prone to turn to ridicule anything beyond the grasp of her ignorance, she was a crabbed disciple of Xantippe, with whom few exchanged a single word beyond the requirements of necessity. Fourteen dreary winters had passed since blessed with a daughter, a little frolicsome lass, who portrayed much of her father's nature. Her sharp, lively face bore an expression of sprightliness. With skittish tricks she hummed her merry tunes, dancing to their lays; she was beloved by the old sailors, attaining the title of "Kitty Portevin, the madcap of the Cinque Ports."

Fully aroused from slumber, it required some tact on the part of De Meudon to carry out his immediate object; Portevin and all associates being strong partizans of Leicester, our hero was obliged to negotiate for a voyage on the ground of personal favour. The host promised assistance

with hearty good will, accompanied by many allusions to former days, engaging to set sail a little before sunset should fair winds prevail. The morning meal consisted of honey cakes and hot fish, which the peevish housewife was prevailed upon to cook in her best style. It was served in an apartment clean and convenient; a table of polished oak, somewhat clumsy in shape, matched with chairs of rude construction, but not uncomfortable. The whole scene was cheered by a bright ray of sunlight peering through a gaping lattice.

During brief intervals of domestic life, permitted by Portevin's roving occupation, the frequency of matrimonial brawls caused him to pass the time in jovial companionship of his shipmates and fellow-townsmen. The room soon filled with sunburnt mariners, warmly debating with their leader against the hurry of future proceedings.

"How fares our worthy Captain? Where's the little lassie?" said a veteran seaman; "her

merry face hath not charmed my heart for many a long day."

"See that the vessel is fully trimmed—tackle ready for use," said Portevin; "before another sunset we shall again set sail."

"What means this furious haste?" said the seaman; "time will not permit a cup to wet for our safe passage, or the invocation of our patron saint before sunset!"

"Aye, before the day is passed," replied Portevin, "with freshened breeze, which heaven send, we sail to Flanders—three short hours and we are gone."

"Provoke not the just anger of our Holy Mother," said the seaman. "Yesternight the moon did struggle through dark overhanging clouds with misty light. A blackened haze now hangs in the distant sky—while the seagull, skimming the surface of the still and rippling sea, foretells the violence of a coming squall."

"Get you away," replied Portevin; "when

all is ready return and drink the cup, which exhausted, thou shalt as freely replenish."

The old man shrugged his shoulders, shaking his head with thoughtful disapprobation. The room was cleared, save two or three of Portevin's principal officers, but the diminished party was soon increased by the arrival of several townsmen, excited with the news of recent battle, the table being quickly decorated with well-stocked flagons, surrounded by numerous cups.

Already aroused by the arguments of the old sailor, De Meudon's fears were not lightened by several efforts of the guests to induce Portevin to make a night of it. Various toasts given, and freely responded to, a cup in honour of my Lord of Leicester was gall and bitterness to our young Knight. Knowing the necessity of concealing his sentiments, his downcast looks scarce escaped detection, while standing erect, with outstretched arms, cups clashed in pledge of their troth. Bountiful in quantity, the liquor was taken with a discretion oft disregarded in more advanced

ages, raising the spirits without dispelling all sense of decorum from the festive board.

As Portevin adhered firmly to the determination of sailing that evening, despite repeated remonstrance, a demand for a display of vocal ability was readily acquiesced in by the noble Knight. He was glad in present company to avoid any conversation on the passing events of those stirring times, though his refined taste could have been but little gratified by the rude and uncultivated brawlings of the old seamen. Further allusion to recent occurrences might perhaps have disclosed his object in proceeding to Flanders, where he hoped to oppose the Earl by raising a force of mercenaries, and then to claim the hand of the Lady Emmeline de Savoy as a reward for his services. He was little conscious that the lady was already in the grasp of a scoundrel, or that her affections were bestowed upon the captive youth at Dover.

So much satisfaction was afforded by Portevin's performances that universal demands were imme-

diately made for further exhibitions of his skill. He easily excused himself. It was solely to beguile the dull hours on shipboard, that he indulged in this pastime. At home his sprightly daughter supplied the need. At the host's suggestion the little lass was summoned, with a burst of approbation from all the company. Entering she received hearty salutations, which she little regarded. With blushes becoming a maiden's cheek, at the request of her paternal, she at once chirruped forth a merry lay, accompanied by an old three stringed instrument.

“ Come to the festive scene
Of dance and lively talk,
In troubled paths of life,
The course we oft must walk ;
So fill the brimming cup,
While others sport and play,
The cheerful notes of song
Will drive dull care away.
A merry night shall pass,
Till morning grey appears ;
No man can ever live
Amid his hopes and fears.”

At the conclusion of this lively chant, using the same instrument, she danced and skipped, in a

manner to vie with any Circassian slave at the sweet waters of Europe, to the intense diversion of assembled spectators.

“ A lass so bright,
From morn till night,
With frolic and with mirth,
Would never rest,
Be ever blest,
The hour that gave her birth.

That heart so gay,
In sport and play,
Would weary hours employ,
No goat could leap,
O'er rock and steep,
With such unbounded joy.”

Anonymous.

The proceedings were at length interrupted by the old seaman returning to quaff the promised cup. This hastily done, they soon embarked, the ample vessel again ploughing its course through the Channel. Watching the distant cliffs, in dim rays of departing daylight, De Meudon threw off a burdensome load of oppression, when borne away on the blue wave of

the rolling deep. The good ship rode merrily o'er the dashing breakers, during the night-squall so truly foretold by the prophetic spirit of the old mariner, whose experience in these important matters seldom proved unworthy of confidence.

CHAPTER XI.

“Your mind is all as youthful as your blood,
Now hear me speak with a prophetic spirit,
For e’en the breath of what I mean to speak,
Shall blow each dust, each straw, each little rub,
Out of the path which shall directly lead
Thy foot to England’s throne.”

King John.—Act 3, Scene 4.

THE merry month of May was on the eve of departure. A refreshing breeze swept the towering cliff that carries the grand fortress of Dover. Bright rays of an evening sun stretched their level beams towards the kingdom of France, and rendered its well defined outlines distinctly visible from a rampart or outwork, that almost beetled over the stony beach. There, beneath the

lofty abyss, boomed a foaming surge, plainly audible, even on the bare and lofty heights, that rose majestically above the threatening waves.

Still oppressed in mind, Sandford paced the rampart with irregular and nervous strides, to invigorate his body, impaired by close seclusion within the thick and massive walls of the Castle. His thoughts wandered from Pevensel to Dunsmore, and to the camp of the Prince's forces. But all was mystery. He shrank from the bare contemplation of Lady Emmeline's fate with a thrilling shudder. It might be one to which death was a consummation devoutly to be preferred. What misery is suspense! Even a knowledge of the greatest calamity is comparatively a light and trifling anguish. Oh! Liberty! thou fair Goddess! could thy blessings be but purchased for a few short days, if at the price of bodily annihilation, or peace of mind destroyed for the remainder of a weary life.

In this mood of contemplative excitement, he was approached by a chief officer of the Castle,

whose stern expression was heightened by a thick moustache of sable hue. A long mantle enveloped his wiry frame almost to the heels, fastened with a girdle, carrying a dirk of deadly aspect. His head was covered with a cap of fur. Past the middle age of life, his once athletic figure portrayed the effects of exertion and constant danger, during wars extended to all parts of Europe.

“Hear my Lord’s pleasure,” said the important functionary, “prisoners of more importance will now occupy this ancient stronghold. From England’s shore thy form is banished for ten long years. If, at the expiration of two days, you still persist in wandering through Britain’s fair domains, that moment will be your death.”

“Thanks for your communication,” replied Sandford, in wild astonishment. “But tell, I pray thee, by whose commands I am thus forbidden the cherished haunts of former years.”

“By the express orders of my Lord of Leicester,” said the officer; “who, since recent victories,

doth now assume the full sway of his authority. But haste and get thee away, the time is short before you must quit these realms."

The officer vanished before Sandford, staggered by this startling, though indefinite intelligence, was able to pursue any further enquiries. He imagined some reverse must have occurred to the Prince's fortunes, which, heaven grant, it might not be too late to redress. It was deemed probable that officers of higher rank in the royal service were about to be secluded in his former quarters. Two short days yet remained to ascertain the fate of the beloved lady, and to reach the Prince's army at all hazards, still hoping to render some valuable assistance. Scarcely had he formed these firm and decided resolutions when the tall and handsome figure of the heir to England's throne drew near with rapid steps. The reality was but too palpable. No phantom of the night could have produced so alarming an effect on Sandford's soul. A serious expression of saddened gloom overshadowed a usually cheerful

face, while the Royal Prince waited in silence to enable his minion to collect the scattered thoughts of a bewildered brain.

“Compose thy confused mind, my faithful servant,” said the Prince. “With all the bitter cup of fortune’s woes, which now I deeply drink, I can rejoice that my imprisonment will release thee from the narrow confines of this frowning fortress, to breathe the purer air of unrestrained liberty.”

“Oh, that Heaven would have spared my eyes this unwelcome sight!” said Sandford. “Liberty is dearly purchased by separation from all that renders life a pleasure, adding oppressive care to a load of grief.”

“Grief ever haunts my weary soul,” said the Prince, “surrounds my bed, and attends my daily walks. Its indulgence is but shame and worthless waste of vain regrets.”

“Most truly speaks my Royal liege,” replied Sandford. “Command, I beseech thee, that service which will be rendered reckless of life

itself. Surely there are numerous stout hearts in England who will rise for thy release?"

"I should be unwilling to believe it otherwise," replied the Prince. "In solemn vows have I made a sacred oath. Its violation might provoke the just vengeance of a righteous heaven. It is but meet that I should deal advisedly, when, to save my Royal father, now but a monarch's shade, have I surrendered myself as a pledge of surety. I am not a man of stone, impenetrable to entreaties of my faithful followers, but of acts of violence my conscience will not permit the exercise."

"Forget not the days of thy former glory," replied Sandford. "The misery of an oppressed people will raise a cry sufficient to reach thy Royal ears through these solid walls; nor will they be content to regard the vessel lost while yet the pilot survives. Let thy perturbed conscience rest. Thou art the hope of England's future, the source of her people's joys. No loyal subjects will rest until thy power is again restored

amid their shouts of triumph, and thine unscrupulous enemies scattered like straw before a rushing wind."

"Joyfully would I witness the fulfilment of your prophecy," said the Prince. "On your allegiance I implore you to rest content. Heaven's decree shall reverse our dire calamities. Resistance would add renown to the tyranny of our foes, bringing the deeper oppression of an unhappy people."

"Forgive my importunity, I implore my Royal liege," said Sandford. "The gentle tenderness of your heart cannot disregard the misery of faithful followers, despoiled of all earthly treasures. Their very domestic joys violated by acts of brutal license, while remorse will prove the downfall of your Royal house. No, once more put on thy bold and venturous spirit, that England's glory may be at last secure. With all the hopes of the world upon you, suffer not your soul to droop under pressure of one reverse. Soon will I light

a flame that will reach from shore to shore of Britain's land."

"Nay!" said the Prince, vehemently, "from error to danger is a certain step. I believe you, my friend. Willingly am I ever yours. Our interview is already too long. Fare thee well! Every moment begets the fear of additional disaster."

Determined by some means to promote his escape, Sandford briefly took leave of the Royal Prince. He hastily quitted the fortress, and sought a few hours of restless repose in a comfortable inn of the town, after completing full preparations to start for Pevensel at the earliest dawn of returning daylight.

Though somewhat impaired in bodily strength by the melancholy of restraint and suspense, Sandford's natural firmness of mind returned under pressure of those startling disclosures the day had revealed. Nightly solitude afforded opportunity for calm reflection. He determined

first to ascertain Lady Emmeline's present situation, and to gather full particulars of recent events, then to direct his efforts in a proper course of action; at the moment, with such imperfect information, he was quite unable to form any definite conclusion.

CHAPTER XII.

“Great lords, wise men ne’er sit and wail their loss,
But cheerily seek how to redress their harms ;
What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallowed in the flood,
Yet lives our Pilot still.”

3rd Part Henry 6th, Act 5, Scene 2.

WHILE the latest stars of night were gradually fading from mortal vision through the brightening radiance of the rising sun, Sandford had already started on his anxious mission, accompanied by two attendants, mounted on fleet and powerful steeds. They were urged to their utmost possible speed, inspiring a hope of reaching Pevensel at an early evening hour. To avoid the risk of observation, a circuitous route was

selected. It was over an expanse of country beset with numerous obstructions, and frequently it became imperative to lead the horses to ensure a due regard for safety.

While steadily wending his course in the desired direction, Sandford became a little more hopeful and assured, under a strong presentiment that Lady Emmeline might, by some means, have escaped the dangers which threatened her, when last parted from, under such trying circumstances. Still harping on this topic, his youthful mind was deeply absorbed in thoughtful muse, when the little party of wayfarers suddenly arrived at a small rivulet, approached by a sloping bank, and encumbered with large unsightly blocks of stone. The stream spread the surface of its wide but shallow waters over a foundation of pebbles, distinctly visible through the crystal ripples of the purling brook, though darkened by broken shades of overhanging foliage. Descending in safety, the animals paused to satiate the cravings of thirst. Then,

cooled and refreshed, they ascended the opposite bank somewhat hastily ; Sandford's horse, stumbling over a rugged stone, rolled heavily to the ground, severely injuring its off fore leg, the rider escaping with slight contusions.

The maimed and limping steed proved a great barrier to the future progress of the journey, and dark shades of coming night already added to the difficulty of the situation, when Sandford, recognising a familiar spot about three miles from the Port of Hastings, left the attendants in charge of the horses, and hastened on foot to the old town.

All thought of proceeding that night abandoned, the abode of an old man, who followed the occupation of a ropemaker, was immediately sought. A son of this worthy subject filled some office in Savoy's establishment. Here our young adventurer soon obtained a full knowledge of Lady Emmeline's present danger, and the passing events of recent days. On the following morning he reached Pevensel, armed with a

matured plan of future operations, after spending a long and dreary night in the deepest contemplation.

During the interval that had elapsed since the decisive contest at Lewes, the Lord of Pevensel and his noble guests, who waited a favourable opportunity for flight to the kingdom of France, spent their useless hours in despondent inaction and despair. Entering with an air of resolution, which seemed to awaken the lethargic stupor that overpowered their terrified senses, Sandford received a welcome of greater condescension than Savoy usually accorded, especially to one regarded as an inferior, even in the slightest degree. Whether this was due to surprise at his appearance, or to any change of inward disposition, the future progress of circumstances must determine. Taking him warmly by the hand, he addressed the young man in flurried accents, while the other noble lords stood by in silent attitudes of solemn thought.

“What guardian angel hath in watchful care

unlocked the strong gates of Dover heights?" said Savoy. "Now have I a purpose for which thou art a fitting messenger, and one where gallantry would prompt a ready acquiescence."

"Faithfully would I obey your commands," replied Sandford. "In banishment my captivity is but lightened of half its load. Before to-morrow's sun is set, must I leave for many weary years the beloved country of my birth. Thy purpose I can easily guess. Your niece has but escaped danger to encounter a deeper peril, which by heaven's help we may yet avert. Why this sinful loss of time? a delay that may have produced the most dire of human calamities."

"My desires have you most truly premised," replied Savoy, visibly affected. "Forget not that the vigor of my drooping spirit is fading under the expiring years of declining life. Your presence infused my heart with a renewed hope. Youthful energy might execute an undertaking, restoring the joy of my remaining days."

"I am but a wanderer in a strange and un-

known land," replied Sandford. "But give me, I implore thee, a full acquittance of my needed sums, in the name of Ralf de Bourdon, a young and trustworthy friend, on whose fidelity you may truly rely. If yet in time, his zeal will quickly foil the malignant designs of De Vere's craft."

"Be assured of my ready compliance," said Savoy, "though by what means this consummation is to be reached surpasses the grasp of my comprehension. If England must lose the service of so good a subject, take with you my letters of recommendation to our Royal Queen, who in Flanders will accord the reception your worth deserves till happier days return."

"With many thanks," replied Sandford, "such is not my present need. Delay not by further enquiries, but honour me with your noble confidence, and the bitterness of disappointment shall not add a wrinkle to your anxious brow."

"There is a heavenly blessing in the joy of youthful hope," said De Valence, the first of the

three lordly guests to break silence. "This worthy young friend disdains to indulge in blank despond, while we fly to distant lands to end our days in solitude and regret."

"Is the star of your noble house for ever set?" replied Sandford, "while through the known regions of the world are cherished the mighty deeds of your venerable forefathers."

"Foster not such flights of boyish fancy," said Bigot. "From the weakness of former rule springs our present woe, raising a hundred tyrants. Our domains already fallen to their rapacity, we are but the living ghosts of our fathers' glory."

"Fie upon thee, my noble lords," replied Sandford. "Why waste your precious lives in vain regrets, until the beauty of hope is gone? Our arms are reversed, but not disgraced, nor is the warlike courage of your retainers degenerated into the craven spirit of a coward's fear. What though our course is beset with rocks of oppression, dashed with the surging breakers of

degrading ruin ; dark clouds of despair o'erhanging our heads, impelled by the fierce winds of tyranny ; yet a trusty guide that shall direct our barque to the haven of security still draws the breath of life. His captivity is but the shame of apathetic followers, who rest until his triumph is achieved. Deem not my expressions the wild imaginations of a youthful brain, but let your hearts' sentiments sympathise with the deep earnestness in which I endeavour to clothe my feeble words. Your possessions, your rank, and the glory of former honors, all depend on present energies. Thousands of willing though oppressed subjects await but the signal of your call. With your scattered thoughts collect our forces both at home and abroad. Then may we redress these crushing harms, and render our enemies a by-word to future generations."

"Upon my life," said Warenne, "the youth doth counsel wisely ; let us ship at once to France, in her fair domains can we raise a worthy force, to assist in the redemption of our unhappy land."

“Such a determination is more worthy of my lord’s former renown,” said Sandford; “now I bid thee farewell. It is not in idle banishment that my soul will rest content to pine. In unknown regions will I shape a future career of usefulness. May God direct its issue to His own good purpose.”

Fortified with the acquittance so cheerfully granted by Savoy, the young man hastily quitted the Castle, sternly disregarding all enquiries as to his ultimate intentions and destination. Mounted on a light palfrey, he rode swiftly away, over a level country, watched from the fortress by the attentive gaze of numerous spectators, until he disappeared in the dim shades of a star-light eve; after casting back many an anxious glance toward the favourite haunt of his happiest days.

In the midst of agitating and painful apprehensions, Savoy indulged in numerous conjectures as to Sandford’s purpose, but his reflections only involving the matter into greater mystery, he

dismissed the subject. With feelings of admiration at the young man's courageous daring, he had the utmost confidence in his perseverance and good judgment. In a few days the distinguished guests took ship for France, greatly stirred by their youthful adviser's earnest appeal. Bidding them a hearty farewell, with many wishes for the success of their undertaking, the Lord of Pevensel was again left to the loneliness of solitary life.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Scarce can I speak, my choler is so great,
Oh ! I could hew up rocks, and fight with flint,
I am so angry at these abject terms.”
King Henry VI.—2nd Part, Act 5, Scene 1.

DURING a long course of years, extending almost to very recent times, the vulgar phrase of “seeing the Lions” has been one of common use. Whether it drew its origin from the carnivorous animals for several centuries confined in the Tower of London we cannot undertake to determine, nor could such discussion awaken much lively interest. It will better serve present objects to deal with a savage lion in the human

shape, vaunting within the solid walls of that ancient fortress.

Rapidly passing over the drawbridge, accompanied by a small retinue of attendants, a lordly Baron paused for a few minutes, on a large open space of ground, where several men of humble rank exhibited their feats of strength by throwing blunted javelins through a raw bull's hide. After witnessing some dexterous casts, and rewarding the successful competitors, this distinguished personage proceeded towards the Lanthorn Tower to the King's apartments, an ancient palace, the site of which is now occupied by the buildings of the War Office.

The indifference of his reception would naturally cause much surprise, especially to an individual of Rochfort de Vere's distinction. After enduring great neglect and inattention, he was at last ushered into the King's Chamber, a saloon recently renovated and adorned with a painting of the story of Antiochus. Here was another protracted and impressive pause, before the door

was thrown open. But instead of giving entrance to my Lord of Leicester, with whom our adventurer had peremptorily demanded an immediate audience, his anger and astonishment was beyond all reasonable bounds, when accosted by the Balestarius or Keeper of the Crossbows, and other official jack guardants.

“By desire of my Lord of Leicester,” said the chief official, “we require you to deliver up the proceeds of illegal seizures made on the domains of William de Manville, without the license of our Sovereign Lord the King. In failure of compliance we declare you an enemy to the State, and forbid you to appear in armour, or to march with horses or arms through these realms.”

“What means this wanton insolence?” replied Rochfort. It is not my purpose to be taunted by menials, but with Leicester I require an immediate audience. Go tell him to beware how his daring arrogance ventures to provoke me by a denial.”

“By virtue of authority assigned by our lord

the King," said the official, "we command you to keep better rule on your tongue within these walls. Your demand is flatly refused. Provoke not a further resentment by any delay of acquiescence, or the forfeiture of your barony at Hurstingham may atone for such rashness."

"Enough of this rude babble," replied Rochfort, "to which I will no longer listen. My Lord is mistaken. Say again unto him that Rochfort de Vere insists on a compliance with his requests, or disavowing all authority, he will no longer subscribe to my Lord's injunctions."

"It is useless to waste further time with vain words," said the officer. "We shall acquaint my Lord with your contemptuous disregard to his desires, and doubtless you will soon receive the intimation of his pleasure, to your disadvantage."

The choleric rage of De Vere at that moment almost baffled description. The spoils of De Manville he regarded as his own by the rules of war, and anticipated a further share of various forfeitures, in accordance with Leicester's former

engagements. Now was it plainly evident that he had been hoodwinked into a vain and unprofitable allegiance. So, consoling himself with thoughts of vengeance, he exulted in the success of the enterprise to kidnap the Lady Emmeline de Savoy, whom he now imagined safely caged in his Castle at Hurstingham, having satisfied the Prior of Dunsmore from the proceeds of the above-mentioned plunder.

During these reflections the little band of officials departed through the same aperture which served for their admittance. Adjoining was the great hall of the Palace, and scarce had the door closed upon the retiring deputation before the quick glance of Rochfort espied Leicester, seated at the further extremity of that spacious apartment, surrounded by numerous favourites. Rushing madly with violent haste, he completely upset the equilibrium of a functionary who endeavoured to prevent his entrance. Then, dashing forward regardless of threat or remonstrance, with flashing eyes he stood face to face before the

object of his wrath, all power of utterance choked by extremity of passion. The Earl regarded him with a complacent smile of serene contempt, while the bystanders mutely gazed on the startling scene in the eagerness of expectant astonishment.

“Has arrogance so blinded your reason that you dare to tread on sands wherein you may quickly sink?” burst forth Rochfort, trembling with passion. “Confront me no more with idle jargon of pampered slaves, thereby rushing with seeming madness from danger to destruction. I demand at your hands a just partition of spoils, my right both by the rules of war and the solemn assurance of former vows.”

“You are already informed of the King’s commands,” replied Leicester, “it will avail you but little to indulge a vain imagination that I shall blench from my purpose for empty threats of one covetous knight. I require an instant restitution of seizures made without my knowledge and sanction ; and as regards further spoils

it is enough that, by the triumph of my arms, I saved you from forfeitures and attainders justly hanging over your head."

"Talk not to me of the King's commands," retorted Rochfort, "he is but a weak and servile puppet of your pleasures. The required restitution I decline to make, even were it in my power. To the Prior of Dunsmore have I transferred the possessions of De Manville, in obedience to my promise. My ends so far gained, I will wager myself for your destruction, unless you are prepared to grant my just and positive claims."

"Let, then, the holy man make the best of his bargain," replied Leicester. "Expect no more at my hands, when, even the Lord of Gloucester, my greatest and most powerful supporter, has received a far less consideration. By contempt alone will I answer such boastful and villainous threats. Wherefore should I tremble at the taunts of a noble lord who seeks but to waste his days in the idleness of licentious indulgence?"

“Flatter not your rapacious soul with the vanity of ease,” continued Rochfort. “The great Llewellyn of Wales already marches his faithful followers, and will doubtless find support from the victims of your selfish avarice. The Queen is raising a force in Flanders, which will render effectual aid, while a turbulent populace utter indignation at the restraint of their beloved Prince. Think not under such pressure to despise the goodwill of former adherents, or your ambitious projects will be trampled under the foot of destruction, like a faded flower, thrown carelessly to the wayside, and trodden by the meanest serf.”

“Such torrents have I already taken effectual measures to stem,” said Leicester. “Is it needful to remind you, that, in the event of hostilities, your domains at Hurstingham would add to my wealth a further increase?”

“In that stronghold I bid you defiance,” replied Rochfort. “Why should I value the friendship of one, who, in spite of my request, has even

released that despicable youth, whose wild dreams dare to aspire to the fair hand of the lady of my noble choice?"

"Then spend not your worthless time in the enthusiasm of pompous ostentation," retorted Leicester, sharply, "or that enterprising gallant may yet despoil you of a fair prize."

With these words Leicester left the great hall, followed by numerous menials, while Rochfort, expressing many bitter invectives, hastily quitted the fortress, giving vent to the coarsest oaths of vengeance, for wrongs whether real or imaginary. After the least possible delay, he commenced a journey to Hurstingham, to make the most of a supposed triumph, in gaining possession of the fair lady, towards whom, it is now to be feared, his depraved and revengeful spirit would show no tenderness or consideration.

CHAPTER XIV.

“The man of firm and noble soul,
No factious clamours can control,
No threatening tyrant's darkling brow
Can swerve him from his just intent.”

BYRON'S *Translation from Horace.*

“Good service should ever meet its just reward,
while I receive but empty promises of a covetous
man. My companions, in whom it is ruin to
confide, daily demean themselves with filthy
license, drunken slaves, loathsome to my sight,
the servile clowns of a degenerate master, for
whose vile purposes, I, an obsequious knave, lack

all earnest of my fidelity, with the loss of fame and reputation.”

Such were the wandering sentiments of Arthur Conisburgh, leader of a scanty cavalcade, directing its course from the confines of a small forest towards the city of Winchester. A morass, flooded to impassable depths by copious downfalls of recent rain, compelled a digression for a few miles, when searching in vain for a safe passage across the obstructive waters, with exhausted patience the band reached a sylvan hovel, constructed of rough materials, hidden by leafy creepers that covered the tottering walls. This rustic abode was tenanted by an old man, commonly known as “Honest John,” who, with his more juvenile and buxom spouse, was ever delighted to entertain, in a humble manner, the perplexed travellers of that intricate country.

The habiliments of these puzzled men distinguished them as the servants of some lordly baron; but high or low, rich or poor, Honest John ever treated alike. With many acknow-

ledgments they received a blunt welcome from the lowly recluse, inviting them to share a simple though well-laden board.

“By kindly looks my spirits are already cheered,” said Conisburgh, “while your proffered hospitality is a boon most acceptable, for, by the faith of St. Anthony, I have not broken fast these eight hours. But, prithee, where may we set our horses?”

“You are right welcome to such as I am able to offer,” said Honest John, as the banquet commenced. “Your horses are already in safety; rest awhile in shelter from the pouring rain, which soon will fall from yon blackened cloud, as though the heavens were weeping for the crimes of man.”

“Your kindness makes every dish a feast,” said Conisburgh, “but our stay must be brief, or we shall fail to reach the city of Winchester before the darkness of night overtakes us in this difficult country.”

“The fault shall not rest on me,” said Honest

John. Soon will I a route direct that shall thither lead by a short and ready path. Though thrice have my possessions fallen to some rapacious lord, until compelled to seek retreat in this seclusion, yet am I no enemy to mankind, but an ever willing friend to those from whom I ne'er received a harm."

"Like an honest man who can pleasure give to the heart of friendship," said Conisburgh. "I firmly believe you speak no empty words of an idle boast, but the time-honoured sentiments of an upright mind, cherished through a long and weary life."

"Aye, cherished from my youth up, even until now," said Honest John. "Despite the persecutions of the oppressor, or the temptations of vice, have I endeavoured to fulfil the revered theme of my childhood thoughts."

"Of which we earnestly beg one more repetition," said Conisburgh.

"The words am I ever pleased to repeat to willing ears," replied Honest John. "It is not

a song; my old and faltering voice has ever been a stranger to the strains of melody. More fitting such accomplishments for a gallant youth, or the fair maiden of his affections. It is this—‘though beauty’s smile will oft alarm, it is an honest heart alone that can give joy and impart true friendship; our daily life is lightened by its leaven, while its pleasures extend beyond this earth’—remember that, young man.”

The reception accorded to this sentiment was one of general satisfaction. Time scarce permitted its expression before a mounted traveller, bearing the aspect of knightly distinction, engaged the attention of the assembly, startled at the unusual circumstance of such a personage proceeding alone and unattended. His attire consisted of a leathern doublet fitting close to the body, hidden by a scarlet mantle, the outer garment being bespattered with mire, and drenched with the downpouring torrents of rain. Breathless exhalations from a panting steed denoted eager haste during a prolonged

journey. The nervous twitchings of his youthful and handsome features exhibited a mixture of forced cheerfulness, influenced by cautious dread, while halting abruptly at the rude door of the old cottage, he cautiously replied to a plain-spoken challenge from its occupant.

“I am a young and adventurous Knight,” said the traveller, “suffering from the painful vicissitudes of these exciting times. My name is Ralf de Bourdon, and I claim no more than the assistance of your guidance to the Priory of Dunsmore.”

“You must seek the City of Winchester,” said Honest John; “from thence it will be needful to obtain some experienced guide, or you may, till all eternity, wander through complicated windings of an intricate forest.”

“Accept the best thanks of a sincere friend,” said De Bourdon, “whose obligations will be deepened by a ready direction to the venerable city.”

“If your lordly condescension will for a time

be satisfied with the shelter of my lowly walls," said Honest John, "I have friends there assembled, seeking the same destination, who shortly departing have already the promise of any humble benefit my temporary care is able to afford."

This invitation needed no second repetition. As the mysterious Knight entered the solitary retreat the assembled guests made their obeisance with much ceremony, at first exhibiting the reserve commonly inspired by a superior presence. This backwardness soon vanishing through the frank and communicative address of the newly arrived traveller, whose mild affability was strange to the ears of men accustomed to rude rebuffs from a proud and overbearing master. Not only were these familiar blandishments prompted by benign attributes of natural disposition, but the supposed Knight, with great surprise, recognised the humble company, by their peculiar garb, as servants of Rochfort de Vere. So by exercising a proper judicious tact, he confidently

anticipated some valuable information, conducive to the successful furtherance of a resolute and important end.

“My friends,” said the supposed Knight, “let not my presence interrupt the cheerfulness of your humble festivities. And whence came ye to these desolate wilds, wandering alone without the supervision of your lordly master?”

“We came hot from scenes of plunder,” said Conisburgh; “our master remains in London. Something left undone rendering his presence a necessity, or else he engages in the concoction of deeper crimes.”

“Our friend is melancholy mad,” said one of the company, drawing a grim face on the wall in imitation of his fellow servant. “The trifling license of a master’s deeds doth shock his tender conscience. Could he but prattle ave and paters, soon a monkish garment would serve to hide the multitude of his sins.”

“Such is too commonly its office,” replied Conisburgh, “and most willingly would I be

spared my share of this present undertaking, though enacted within the holy walls of Dunsmore, when nothing will reward fidelity to my master, save the lofty and ill-tempered looks showered upon those who care not for his favours."

"And what is the intention of this hurried journey to the sanctified retreat of Dunsmore?" replied the supposed Knight, endeavouring to suppress his eager earnestness. "Surely you do not contemplate assuming the monkish cowl in obedience to your friend's suggestion?"

"You are far wide, Sir Knight, of the object of our instructions," said Conisburgh. "Having accompanied our lord in an expedition to seize the domain of a Knight, slain on the field at Lewes, by name De Manville, the proceeds of this forfeiture have been handed to the Prior of Dunsmore. By way of consideration he engages to deliver into our care a fair lady, whom we are charged to escort to the safe custody of our master's stronghold at Hurstingham."

“Where, by a ready compliance to his desires she may secure the attention becoming her rank,” said one of the company. “My friend had better remain at Winchester, if his tender compunctions cannot endure the sight of woman’s tears.”

Regaling themselves with copious draughts of liquor, the assembly now indulged in coarse and noisy pastime, while observing the mildness of Conisburgh under the vulgar insinuations of his loathed companions, the supposed Knight sat musing in a corner, overpowered by the buxom hostess, who showed that submissive regard which oft becomes a nuisance. The advancing day necessitated a hasty departure. The honest old man accompanying the travellers to a direct and unmistakable path, took his leave of the little troop. The noisy portion hurried forward, De Bourdon and Conisburgh following at some little distance, they proceeded through a thickly packed forest, over a smooth, grassy glade, the wide-spreading and intermingled branches of numerous

towering oaks affording a slender shelter from the heavy shower of pitiless rain.

“It surprises me much, Sir Knight,” said Conisburgh, “to see you thus solitary and unattended, while I have honestly served a master from my youth, from whom I receive nothing but blows and angry looks. Permit me to follow your wandering course, for there is in your manner a charm that would command my faithful service.”

“Your fidelity is worthy of a better master,” said De Bourdon. “At present such an engagement would be of little avail, even to the most zealous of deserving followers.”

“Forgive my importunity, Sir Knight,” replied Conisburgh. “My sight has been long sickened by the nightly revels of licentious companions. Forced by a violent and brutal master to complicity in acts of vicious wickedness, I am wearied with such loathsome and degrading occupations. Whatever hardships I may be called upon to endure, faithfully would I prove your

trusty servant, even to the sacrifice of life ; but free me, I earnestly implore you, from such abject serfdom to iniquity and sin.”

“ That will I speedily accomplish if you will follow my present injunctions,” replied De Bourdon. “ When to-morrow’s dawn has dispelled the darkness of the coming night, proceed with your train to Dunsmore ; returning with the fair lady, I will again meet you at a small stone which lies a short distance from the King’s Gate. An entertainment will be provided suitable to occupy the degenerate minds of your degrading companions, when, riding quickly away with the noble lady, proceed to the Castle of Pevensel, in Sussex, bearing this scroll to one Peter de Savoy, in whose noble service you will be forthwith retained, until the chances of life again bring us together. These silver pieces which I now offer will prove the earnest of my integrity and goodwill if you fail me not.”

Though widely distant their station in life, this solemn compact was concluded between the

young men in cheerfulness and ready zeal. With deep regret Conisburgh deemed it necessary to part for a short interval from his new acquaintance, overjoyed at the prospect now before him, which seemed a visionary belief in impossible dreams. He quickly rejoined his companions, when, arched by the prismatic haze of an evening rainbow, the venerable Cathedral of the ancient city burst proudly into view.

With urgent speed De Bourdon retired to the solitude of a secluded inn, the natural buoyancy of a hopeful spirit directing his storm-beaten course to the haven of confident success in a dangerous enterprise. It required a powerful display of intellectual ability to outstrip the unbridled machinations of revengeful foes, who made the perpetration of sinister and designing crime the habitual occupation of life.

CHAPTER XV.

“A light and goodly bark
Glides through the softest breeze
Of zephyr’s gentle breath
That swept the glassy seas;
Its purpose to unfold
In haste a lordling strove,
Mingling with war’s alarms,
A message of sweet love.”

ANONYMOUS.

WHILE the gentle ripples of a glassy sea were swept by the breath of softest zephyrs, a small vessel entered the little haven of Pevensel, from which a juvenile Knight landed so speedily that it might safely be assumed he was the bearer of some intelligence, the mystified inhabitants, who endeavoured to gain some information as to its

purport, being completely baffled by the incomprehensible gibberish of a Flemish crew.

Though suffering from the effects of a somewhat protracted sea voyage, the gallant youth displayed a great vivacity of manner. Tall and handsome in person, his countenance beamed with complacent smiles of self-satisfaction, denoting the inward pleasure afforded by his mission. With graceful courtesy he nodded in answer to respectful salutations greeting his arrival, and rapidly proceeded to the Castle in a light walk, broken occasionally by short trots. His sprightly earnestness soon aroused Savoy from a state of listless somnambulism. The noble Lord was astonished at the unexpected appearance of one whom he imagined still exhibiting his talents in the fair regions of Flanders.

Since the three noble Lords left for France, after Sandford undertook the release of Lady Emmeline from her danger, Savoy had spent the long and dreary days in the anxiety of contemplation, which, telling visibly on the hallowed

cheeks of his increasing years, caused a depression of spirits visible even to the humblest domestic of the Castle. His mind was now filled with the direst apprehensions—"The good youth is banished from the land—Ralf de Bourdon—that name is not familiar to my ear—he may be a goodly knight, and worthy of the trust of my acquittance in unlimited sums." Such was the thoughtful muse interrupted by the newly arrived visitor. The noble Lord determined at once to enlist him in the fair lady's service. He was only prevented by the quickness of address which characterised De Meudon's proceedings, who, since he left England under the care of Portevin, had been charged to convey a communication from Damne, sent by the Queen to her son. It was to be delivered to the captive Prince, if possible, without the knowledge of his appointed guards.

"What kind winds," said De Meudon, "have impelled my gliding bark to this hospitable haven that I may pour forth words to dispel the

melancholy thoughts oppressing my Lord's soul. Mine is, indeed, a goodly office, and may it meet its due and fair reward."

"There is nothing I can bestow which your knightly distinction would deem a recompense," said Savoy. "You have already my welcome, and can, if so inclined, render me earnest service. I am troubled with horrible imaginings that drown my brooding thoughts in surmises of present evil. But what brings you in haste from Flanders?"

"I come first to talk with you—and where is the living man I would more gladly serve, even to undertakings of desperation?" replied De Meudon. "But, soft, the Queen is gathering a vast force in Flanders to restore the liberty of her injured son. She requests the immediate conveyance of all available sums, and I am charged to convey this intelligence to the Prince. Before to-morrow's sun has run its course must this be accomplished; then I seek of my Lord a recompense, should my boldness of heart prove worthy of a fair lady's love."

“Let what is to be done be done quickly,” replied Savoy, visibly affected at intervals. “If I comprehend your desires aright, and can trust my aged and failing ears, you aspire to the fair hand of Lady Emmeline. Heaven grant that you could restore her to this home in safety and honour, then would you earn a measure of thanks more than her affections or my gratitude could ever repay. My niece doth now require a protection, which my declining years fail to afford, and it would accomplish the desire of my life to see her matched to one of such noble parentage. Accept my heartfelt acquiescence even before it is asked.”

“My Lord is gifted in the utterance of prophetic syllables,” said De Meudon, “and hast spoken words of joy to so unworthy a subject as myself. If the fair lady’s honour is at stake, the more fitting opportunity for a gallant Knight to win the reward of her affections.”

Accompanied by visible emotions of sorrow, Savoy poured forth a full recapitulation of Lady

Emmeline's danger. It will scarcely be necessary to repeat these particulars. He added the expression of his fears, that she might have fallen into the snares so deeply dreaded. The name of Ralph de Bourdon proved an inexplicable myth to the eager listener, who vowed to effect the lady's rescue, regardless of life, even under the worst of circumstances. During the midst of indulgence in mingled protestations of bravery and love, the attention of the noble Lords was directed to another vessel, then entering the haven of Pevensel. The bustle and confusion occasioned by this circumstance indicated the importance of the personages it conveyed, and the young Knight was deputed by Savoy to offer the hospitality of the Castle.

In the execution of this errand, De Meudon was surprised to meet an old acquaintance, a noble attached to the French Court, who came to England with communications from the King of France, accompanied by the fair companion of his existence. Having resided sometime in

Provence with his father, the young Knight had spent many happy days with these esteemed friends, whom he now conducted to the Castle to receive the salutations of its Lord.

The courtier engaged Savoy in a conversation conducted in the French language, the latter forbearing to ask any questions concerning his guest's purpose, which the rules of hospitality would forbid, while De Meudon gathered from the lady, by his graceful blandishments, the expression of her determination to visit the Prince at Dover. So far did the young man ingratiate himself into the lady's good favour, that he persuaded her to deliver privately the scroll brought from Flanders, though she was utterly ignorant of its contents. Thus having accomplished that desired object, he was free to pursue his rival love suit without further let or hinderance.

There was much movement in the Castle to prepare a feast suitable to such important guests. A table was at length spread with the choicest

viands, and groaning under a dazzling display of plate, it denoted the almost regal magnificence of the noble Lord's possessions. During the repast De Meudon was engaged in one constant endeavour to conceal the depression of Savoy's spirits, so evident in his exclamations and gestures. The distinguished guests did not fail to observe its burden, the noble courtier venturing on some slight enquiry as to the cause of such grief.

"Why suffer your brow to be clouded with deep remorse?" said the courtier. "Does oppression reign so triumphant through your land, that my lord is not safe from fears and alarms?"

"You truly premise that sorrow hangs on my aged brow," replied Savoy. "Daily I walk on the quicksand of disaster. Our King is prisoner to his foes; even my noble possessions are no longer safe from the rapacious grasp of covetous men. Yet there is an unspeakable dread of even greater evils, which lays a burdensome secret on my weary soul."

“You would do well to exchange such dire forebodings for more delightful measures,” said the courtier. “It is ever on his ills rather than his blessings that man is apt to dwell. We have here a young Knight, whose skill can soon dispel this melancholy by those musical arts which gained him great renown, even amongst the accomplished notables of Provence.”

There was a short pause, during which, in deference to the wishes of his guests, Savoy assented to their request by a slight inclination of the head, though song was by no means in accordance with his present humour. The inhabitants of the south of France still retained much of their old love for music and poetry, notwithstanding the cruel persecution endured throughout the Albigensian war, which ravaged their country in the early part of the thirteenth century.

Possibly it was owing to residence in those fair districts, that De Meudon had acquired his knowledge of the troubadour's art.

“ There was a man in olden time,
A troubadour was he ;
Whose passing chant and lilting rhyme
Had mighty charms for me.”

ELIZA COOK.

The young Knight complied by singing a familiar tune, displaying his ability in rhyme, by suiting its measure to the following verse, given quite impromptu :—

“ With zealous haste I crossed the wave,
Speaking of strife and war’s alarms ;
But now I banish thoughts so brave,
To contemplate a maiden’s charms.

“ A threatening fiend mars beauty’s lot,
And dangers great attend his sway ;
To crush a vile and wicked plot,
My valour strong will I display.

“ In anxious moments must I wait,
Oh, fates, spare thine adverse decree ;
Fair lady, if not yet too late,
My love shall echo soft to thee.”

A little pressure was requisite before the fairer guest was likewise induced to display her talents. But this diversion was brought to a somewhat abrupt termination, through an announcement

that the cavalcades were in readiness, by which the guests were to continue their respective journeys.

Surrounded by armed men of warlike appearance, the horses were adorned with most magnificent trappings suitable to the dignity of the travellers, who, after numerous expressions of regret from the noble Lord, declined to prolong a stay at Pevensel, taking their leave with graceful courtesy and thankful declarations. The courtier pursued his way to London, the lady proceeding to Dover to await the arrival of her lord on his return to France.

As the day slowly advanced, Savoy relapsed into his former sensations of fear and dismay. Actively engaged in preparations for departure in search of Lady Emmeline, De Meudon was endeavouring to allay the noble lord's apprehensions, when a small party of riders, advancing through the soft twilight of a fading evening, attracted the notice of a far-sighted warder, who kept a vigilant guard from his lofty watch tower.

Scarcely had he time to give an alarm, before the horses came down upon the castle with emulous rapidity. The commotion this circumstance produced was only succeeded by outbursts of joy, which the termination of our next chapter will explain.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Oh ! what makes woman lovely ? Virtue, faith, and gentleness in suffering, and endurance through scorn and trial ; these call beauty forth, give it shape celestial, and admit to sisterhood with angels.”

BRENT.

SHORTLY after the solemn notes of an early mass had echoed their final sounds through the vaulted roofs of Dunsmore, a pious maiden received an intimation from the Superior that before noon-tide she would cease to be an inmate of those sacred walls, all enquiry as to destination being refused with petulance and evasion. Never on previous occasions had the presence of that spiritual lady so impressed a youthful mind with overpowering horror. Remembering suspicions

distinctly implied by the fair Lady of Arundel, even to Emmeline's innocent mind no lingering doubt remained. She was the victim of a vile and licentious plot.

With prayerful thoughts, she immediately retired into quiet solitude, giving vent to a thrilling passion of grief's first outburst. Then she exclaimed in hopefulness—

“That same gracious heaven, which sustained me through former danger, will not withhold its helping hand in my present need.”

The beautiful allurements of her pallid, though still charming features, were scarcely marred by the weariness of anxious seclusion. Seated at a small latticed opening, she gazed, through tearful eyes, on the graceful undulations of the velvet-turfed slopes that recent showers had refreshed. The sweeping breadths of a lofty forest were before her. This backed the varied landscape with soft emerald shades which were relieved by the ivory brilliance of blossomed chestnuts that shone in vivid rays of morning

light. A dark cloud, in aspect like a bare and rugged mountain, rose proudly in the distant horizon, foreboding the approach of mid-day storms, which, like the fair lady's trials, might be again dispelled before the shadows of the surrounding objects were lengthened by the level beams of a setting sun.

Still musing in an attitude of contemplation, Emmeline espied a small train of horsemen just emerging from an open vista in the remote forest. She eagerly watched their progress, and broke forth into further outbursts of abject sorrow, when, recognising the dress of Rochfort de Vere's followers, the bitterness of an unhappy fate seemed imminent as a realized certainty.

By the hushed murmurs of hastened prayer, the fair lady was again strengthened. In the determination that heartless betrayers should not be witnesses of her grief, she bade them a hearty farewell, with the expression of many undeserved blessings. Her manner surprised the bystanding

crowd by an apparent lightness of spirits, which they attributed to ignorance of present danger, unable to comprehend the divine purity of her maiden heart. Scarce had the escort reached the confines of the wooded forest, before she was again overpowered by the extremity of terrified grief, and choked with convulsive outbursts of painful sobs.

With the exception of Conisburgh, the sight of the lady's anguish only provoked unmanly expressions of coarse and indignant taunts. That young guardian, watching a favourable opportunity, stealthily placed in the fair lady's hand a small packet, well and safely secured from the observation of curiosity. After a spasmodic effort to restore composure, with trembling fingers she opened the unexpected dispatch, which, to her overjoying astonishment contained a small ring, given as a keepsake to the adored youth of her affections before she left the beloved home at Pevensel. Attached was a brief writing, executed in his unmistakable hand—"Be silent and

fear not." She now indulged confident expectations that her devoted friend must be released from a gaol of captivity to effect her speedy deliverance, though by what means was involved in profound mystery—a mystery only exceeded by the fact of such a missive coming through a coadjutor wearing the garb of Rochfort's service. Still, in passive trust, she rigidly maintained the imposed direction of strict reserve.

With the following twilight, the little band of travellers reached the stone mentioned on the previous day by the supposed Knight, but, to Conisburgh's dismay, that enterprising character was nowhere visible. An untoward circumstance that was hardly a matter of wonderment. The King's gate at the entrance to the city of Winchester, and the Church of St. Swithin, which rested on the buttresses of that frequented portal, together with the entrance to an adjoining Convent, was enveloped in one mass of flame. A riotous mob were wreaking vengeance on all their neighbours. With what object they themselves

were probably unaware. It at first appeared little but a motley assembly of—

“ A noisy crowd,
Like woman’s anger, impotent and loud.”

DRYDEN.

Though the mischief already perpetrated was shortly followed by indiscriminate acts of deeper violence.

Halting at the appointed rendezvous, Emmeline remained under the care of Conisburgh, whose five companions, impelled by unrestrainable curiosity, rushed forward to the stirring scene of tumultuous strife. At that moment the fury of the contending parties seemed to redouble. Two of the band were carried by the violence of a rushing crowd through the burning gateway to a considerable distance within the narrow streets of the old City. Thus these adventurous swains were debarred all possibility of retreat in the confused excitement of a murderous uproar. Their three remaining fellow travellers endeavoured to seek refuge in the Convent of St.

Swithin, and being mistaken for servants of the establishment—the objects of especial hatred—they were speedily numbered amongst the victims of a brutal and lawless massacre. At this critical juncture De Bourdon, unobserved by the fair lady, approached the small stone. By dumb motions he directed Conisburgh to ride away by a suitable track, and followed himself at a respectful distance. After some four miles were accomplished he advanced. The new candidate for Savoy's service was desired to proceed a little ahead for the purpose of indicating a safe route through the surrounding darkness, and with much difficulty the supposed Knight restrained an immediate impulse of joyful emotion, when, in his well-known person, Emmeline quickly recognised the beloved object of her youthful affection.

“It seems,” said Emmeline, after a short pause, “but the fanciful imaginations of a wild dream, the bitter heaviness of dreary nights has changed to unspeakable joys. I must now owe you a debt of gratitude which no affection can repay.

Oh! tell me promptly, what blessed spirit of grace has so smiled on your path, releasing you in safety from such dangerous and implacable foes?"

"Unhappily our present situation does not warrant such joyful outbursts of emotion," replied Sandford. "Thus far fortune appears in its upward course, but in the midst of its dazzling light there are dark threatening clouds of trouble yet to be encountered. Years of anxious care and foresight may not suffice to dispel them. Still, thanks to a righteous heaven, I have been the happy means of your deliverance from the deepest disasters which could befall so virtuous and innocent a maiden."

"It is ever my happiness to obey thee," said Emmeline. "Whatever dangers may surround us, my confiding heart would be lightened of half its load of oppression could we share the endurance of all impending disasters."

"Be not dismayed at the expression of words which idle affectation would only withhold," replied Sandford, gently taking the fair lady's hand.

“The Prince’s arms have experienced a disastrous reverse, our enemies now enjoy a triumphant and oppressive sway. Heaven grant it may be as brief as it is complete! For ten long weary years am I sentenced to banishment from the fair domain of this unhappy country. Therefore, I implore you, let reason occupy its appropriate place in the contemplations of your womanly mind. Think of me as a devoted friend; as a deliverer from licentious violence; a release effected at the risk of my own unworthy life. But no longer regard me as a future lord, a consummation the vicissitudes of changed and restless times have rendered a stern and positive impossibility.”

“Why should you add to my bitter trials even the most remote hints at a desired infidelity?” cried Emmeline, in earnest accents. “At your bidding have I endured the miseries of solitary seclusion, and a longsuffering suspense, now requited by the withdrawal of affections deeply rooted in my trustful heart.”

“Mistake me not,” replied Sandford. “My arguments were solely based on the dictates of reason. The affection of my deepest love has warmed under the contemplation of your faithfulness, endurance in suffering, and the constant exercise of nearly all the divine attributes which grace a woman’s soul. Do me not so severe an injustice, nor speak of infidelity to one, who, for your sake, has dared to remain on the shores of England, when (in the event of detection) his life would atone for so rash an act.”

“Then why seek to terminate an affection which has prompted the incurrence of so fearful a danger?” said Emmeline, with quivering lips. “Heaven forbid that I should detain you from higher objects. How can I forget a sympathy implanted not only from regard, but heightened by the obligations of gratitude? In my uncle’s declining years, you are the only friend in whom I can look for guidance; tell me, whether in anything, however trifling, I ever gave you displeasure.”

“There is but one exception that might be deemed a spot on the purity of your nature,” replied Sandford. “The concealment of your affections from the knowledge of your guardian. It much surprises me that a spirit, capable of so much endurance through scorn and trial, should be weighed down by so imaginary a dread; nor, to be plain, would it consist with my honest, though lofty aspirations, that my overtures should be regarded as a degradation.”

“Trifle not with my passionate feelings,” said Emmeline, suffused in tears. “You well know the arrogance of my uncle’s pride overpowers whatever good qualities he otherwise possesses. The utmost exercise of my weak powers would fail to convince him. He could never believe that superiority of genius could prove anything but degradation to the imaginary advantages of proud birth, though now I can express my devotion for you as a protector, and urge with energy the affections of a grateful heart. Still, where lies this immediate necessity? If the

cruel decrees of fate compel our separation, why may I not be permitted to dote in silent meditation?"

"Those reasons would be urged to greater advantage while fresh in the breast of recollection," replied Sandford; "time only can soften the sternest prejudices of mankind, and there is a pleasure arising from a fearless and conscientious performance of duty which exceeds all gratification that human nature is capable of enjoying."

"I faithfully promise a true and passive obedience," rejoined Emmeline, "even if it should involve the incurrance of my uncle's deepest resentment. But tell me to what distant regions you now direct your rapid flight?"

"For the present," said Sandford, "I seek security in the wild mountains of Wales. There will I endeavour to organise a resistance to our enemies, which may by Heaven's help spread throughout the length of the land. But rest

assured that Rochfort de Vere will still exercise his wicked arts for your destruction. Make me this positive promise, never leave the safety of Pevensel, unless at the bidding of one who shall again produce the little token placed temporarily in your hands during your recent trial; and be comforted, though parted by distance, my watchful care will ever attend your footsteps."

In the early dawn of a summer's morning the grey towers of William the Strong's fortress rose proudly over a white mist, which enveloped the face of the earth in twisted and irregular coils. Worn out with excessive fatigue, it was requisite that Emmeline should immediately seek tranquillity in that hospitable domain. The three travellers entering its castellated walls were accorded a sympathising welcome. But even this ancient Palace of Royalty was depressed by the disasters of altered circumstances, its noble lord having received commands from Leicester, had to provide hostages for his good faith or to deliver

up his noble possessions at Arundel. This rendered Sandford's stay one of brief necessity. After partaking of suitable refreshment he departed through a thickly wooded country to seek concealment. With many protestations of renewed affection he took a hearty leave of Lady Emmeline, whether for years or for ever the future course of our story will suffice to show.

The agitation of these anxious moments prevented Emmeline from enjoying repose during that trying day. She spent its weary course in exchanging with the Lady of Arundel those mutual consolations needed by their respective troubles. In the early evening she retired, passing hours in the outpouring of tearful and earnest prayer for a further protection of providential guidance over the adored youth who had so fearlessly accomplished her deliverance. She mingled her devotions with expressions of thankfulness for all recent blessings, until comforted and composed she reclined, in the darkness of

night, on a richly embroidered couch. Peacefully calm and happy was that repose.

“The darkness ends a day of anxious care,
Her vesper hours were spent in thoughtful prayer,
In placid slumber rests her weary head ;
Sweet angels guard the soft and lonely bed,
On features calm the moon reflects her light,
And wind’s soft murmurs break the stilly night.”

ANONYMOUS.

On the following morning she departed for Pevensel, accompanied by Conisburgh and a few more attendants, kindly provided by the Lady of Arundel. That destination was reached in safety shortly before nightfall. The unspeakable joy of her worthy guardian, and the gratification of the domestics, mingled with the cries from her own sobbing heart, was an affecting scene on which we forbear to dwell. She retired quickly to rest, glad to be relieved from the scrutinizing gaze of De Meudon’s profound admiration. A full account of all recent proceedings was duly recapitulated by the faithful Conisburgh, who soon felt quite at ease in his new service.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Each vassal has a wild, distracted face, and looks as full of business as a blockhead in time of danger.”—DRYDEN.

SECURE in a feudal stronghold and embittered with vexatious disappointments, the effect of nightly revels was still distinctly marked on Rochfort de Vere's countenance, while pacing the ramparts at Hurstingham with that restless impatience usual to men engaged in depraved and sinful deeds.

“What delays these loitering slaves, for whom I watched till yesterday's sun sank in the western sky, and —,” here he was interrupted by two

figures approaching by the avenue leading to the fortress.

The commanding towers were stationed on the crest of a hill; and projecting like a narrow promontory from the adjacent country, the summit of the sloping ground commanded extensive views of a surrounding forest. The banks receded from the Castle walls by a delving steep, the sides covered closely with beeches and copse-wood; these effectually prevented any encroachment, except in one direction, which was studded with a long vista of fir trees.

After Lady Emmeline effected her ready escape, the riot at Winchester had barely subsided, even on the following morning. At the earliest available moment, during the subsequent confusion, the two servants, carried into the City by the pressure of the crowd, commenced a search for their missing companions; but the entrance to the Convent was still barred by a large and excited mob. Then making swiftly to the small stone outside the King's gate, they premised that

their fellow-travellers, and their fair charge, had continued the journey to Hurstingham. When arriving at the portal of that Castle they were met by Rochfort de Vere, who conducted them to the great Hall, the men naturally supposing their fellow-vassals already to have reached that destination, while the master imagined the arrival an advance-guard of the cavalcade which was shortly to be expected.

The condition of the hall at that moment would give a tolerable insight into the manners and customs of the inhabitants. Anyone possessing the most ordinary observation will be well acquainted with the appearance of a supper table, after the guests have departed, even in modern and polite society. What a confused wreck of former regularity, wine glasses half emptied left in a disordered mingling, plates, yet holding small fragments of undevoured delicacies, the once clean and snowy table-cloth, strewed and bedaubed in the general scramble. Still the worthy partakers have gratified their appetites,

without overstepping the limits of propriety ; but we have now to contemplate the remains of wild and dissolute indulgence. The old oaken tables, which stretched their narrow length in a parallel line round the massive walls, were pushed into diverse angles, while the seats lay scattered like baskets in the bustle of a vegetable market. The drinking cups, thrown in careless heaps, mostly on their sides, were surrounded by small pools of liquid, and a floor greased with trodden fragments of broken viands, made the whole scene a suitable sequel to drunken revelry, continued until the dawn of returning daylight. Here two unsuspecting vassals, with wild and distracted faces, confronted the stern and savage countenance of an enraged and impatient master.

Under these peculiar circumstances, the affrighted vassals remained stationary, anticipating some interrogatories concerning their delay in following the main body of the expected travellers. After waiting a few moments for information, which he supposed the bewildered

serfs could afford, Rochfort at length broke an awful and protracted silence.

“Wherefore such idleness, you loitering grooms, that now stare on vacancy like block-heads in dismay. It is a week since I sent you on this business. Methinks you conspire to defeat my ends, while your mouths are filled with my rations. Speak out, you rascals, and account for your audacity in thus trifling with my impatience.”

“We are ever my Lord’s faithful servants,” said one of the men, “and have followed our companions to the utmost of possible speed. Oppress not thine unfortunate victims by angry looks, when, to save our lives, we were compelled to fly.”

“Vile hounds,” interrupted Rochfort, “do you come to mock the dragon in his fury—tell me, where are those worthless slaves, and the fair lady? Whence do ye come? Provoke not my endurance by the garnish of useless concoctions, or such punishments await you as never before were inflicted in this Castle.”

In penitential tones the two serfs poured forth

a full relation of the circumstances which caused the separation from their fellow-travellers, and expressed a full belief that the remainder of the party could not be far distant, if not already arrived. There was no allusion to the supposed knight, of whom, it will be remembered, they saw nothing on that occasion. Quite in ignorance of his intentions, they attached no importance to the accidental *rencontre* on the previous day ; indeed, in the excitement of terror, this occurrence had passed away from memory. After listening in silence to the conclusion of these arguments, Rochfort again burst forth, his lips quivering with the vehemence of perplexed excitement.

“Think not to excuse your neglect by wily and evasive inventions. My purposes are not to be defeated through hirelings and dependents. Return at once, and seek the lost and daring hounds ; if you find them not, your lives shall answer for such rashness.”

“I implore my lord to deal reasonably with those who have endeavoured to execute his com-

mands faithfully," answered one of the menials. "There is scarcely an occasion for such alarm; the missing wayfarers will most surely soon return, or probably have sought refuge in the Convent of St. Swithin, yet surrounded by an excited populace, from whom we have escaped with difficulty."

"Then let horses be saddled at once," replied Rochfort, "I myself will go and seek them out, and woe to the reptiles' heads if I find them still loitering on the road."

Even to Rochfort's enraged mind, the suggestion of his menials seemed to bear some reasonable appearance of probability, though he considered the whole matter as a serious uncertainty. The delay in procuring horses was only exceeded by the difficulty in finding the requisite number of attendants, few being sufficiently sober after the wassailry of the preceding night. On reaching the city of Winchester some hours after sunset, the seekers found that excitement had been succeeded by tranquillity, like a dead calm following the violence of a gale.

It would be rather foreign to the purpose of our story to trace every step by which Rochfort pursued his investigation. So closely had the inmates of the convent secluded themselves from further molestation, that no information could be gained until the following day had far advanced, when a solemn mass was celebrated for the repose of the souls of many unfortunate victims, amongst whom were found the mortal remains of the two butchered servants.

Amid all his vexations and disappointments, Rochfort was now fully satisfied concerning the statements brought to him. All further inquiries were utterly fruitless. He indulged an imagination of the lady in Conisburgh's custody, returned to Dunsmore to ensure greater safety, or lost in the intricacies of the forest, which intercepted the road to that sacred retreat. We now leave him in a fixed determination to form his followers into separate divisions, to proceed to the aforesaid destination, early on the following morning.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ I felt it prompt the tender dream,
When slowly sank the day’s last gleam,
You rous’d each gentler sense,
As, sighing o’er the blossom’s bloom,
Meek evening wakes its soft perfume,
With viewless influence.”

COLERIDGE.

To regard any proposed schemes, however slightly advanced, as settled and accomplished fact, is a common failing with persons who have reached the years of dotage; a preconceived delusion frequently giving rise to troublesome and unpleasant inconvenience. Acting under this peculiar impression, Savoy’s positive conversation with regard to his niece’s affections led De

Meudon into grievous error. The familiar tone in which the noble lord was accustomed to speak of future arrangements, implied a notion that the lady must have yielded a ready compliance, and though a spell seemed to hang over the progress of his love suit, still the gallant youth believed his ultimate happiness a secure consummation.

To the young Knight's chagrin, the habits and manners of the lady, since her return to Pevensel, appeared to have undergone a marked change. Her features, though more pale and emaciated, maintained their former liveliness of expression. A winning smile often afforded deep pleasure to the beholder, before able to steal a second glance at the object of admiration. Sometimes she would sit for hours in pensive thought, the effect of frequent tears plainly visible in her suffused eyes. Rarely joining in society, except at the usual meals, she was accustomed to retire at the earliest available moment ; more time being spent in devotional exercises than former usage had observed. Under an oppressive grief for which

no sympathy could be asked, she felt the remorse of a guilty secret in withholding from her uncle any communication of her inward affection. Her affability of manner while in his company forbade De Meudon to suppose any estrangement between them, so he determined to seek immediate opportunity for an expression of his sentiments, whether by day or in the quiet stillness of night.

Soon the desired opportunity presented itself. It was the lady's custom to take evening exercise on a battlement of the castle, extending between two lofty turrets. The young aspirant noticed her ascent up one of these eminences ; he ventured to follow to the summit of the winding stairs, when, spell-bound in impatient expectation, he awaited near the spot where the fate of his cherished conceptions would soon be spoken. No eye was strained to greet his coming, but the tender maiden looked musingly upon the contents of a small packet taken from her bosom. Then, replacing the treasure, she gazed thoughtfully upon the dancing waves that already sparkled in

the evening moonbeams. Her thoughts are with one bewildered wanderer far away ; but one momentary sigh escaped, for it was a sacred sorrow that knew no earthly sympathy. Gentle creature, Heaven will reward such true affection ; and though adverse winds may keep the bark of love's fond memorial back, yet may she long for a happy day when severed hearts might meet to part no more ; but still in silent wonderment the intruder watches the unconscious girl.

This pause was prolonged for several minutes before De Meudon regained sufficient self-possession to disturb the lady's solitude. At length, retracing his steps a short distance down the staircase, De Meudon quickly returned, carefully creating enough noise to prevent any sudden surprise at his appearance. Then he approached the fair object of his search with a cordial but respectful salute, when the lady, perceiving a slight embarrassment, addressed him in sweet and agreeable tones, though she would rather have been spared the disturbance.

“What has led you to wander in the dullness of evening and to forsake the merry pastimes which now sound through the old hall in innocent mirth? I pray you seek the repose so greatly needed to refresh your weary looks. Overcome with sad thought, I am a poor companion to beguile these lonely hours.”

“Forgive, in kindness, the well-meant intrusion,” replied De Meudon. “It is to seek a rest you alone can afford that brings me to the heights of this lofty turret; peace of mind and relief to my inward soul. No bodily repose would restore my anxious weariness, for I sleep not,” continued the exquisite, “while tears dim the eye of beauty. Away with such constant thoughts of sadness, and let me hope for joys to come!”

“You assuredly require more than my power can bestow,” answered Emmeline. “The morrow will furnish its allotted portion of cares or joys, as a ruling Power above may deem most expedient for our future good. The hour is long passed which custom appropriates to devotion,

my attendants are waiting my return, so pray accept, for the night, the sincere blessings of a maiden's heart."

Crossing the small platform of the sequestered turret, Emmeline was about to descend the narrow stairs, when the young Knight placed himself in the arched entrance, gently holding the fair lady's wrist, while continuing his orations in the following language—

"Stay, fair lady, mistake me not. With the purest motives I endeavour to remove a sorrow which weighs oppressively on my sympathising heart. If this night air imparts a chill to your slender frame, I beseech you to join me in a hawking expedition on the morrow, when I will present a token which may dispel your sad and troubled thoughts."

Never contemplating his advances as a lover, the fair lady had always regarded De Meudon as a sincere friend. A lively recollection of pleasure afforded in his boyish days was not effaced by an absence of some five years. His polite accom-

plishments, both natural and acquired, were ever an engaging recreation for leisure hours ; but such constant flow of levity becomes irksome during the serious moments of life. Though winning every respect by activity in danger and honesty of principle, still even to a mind so youthful and confiding as Lady Emmeline's, he appeared deficient in the more sterling qualities of manhood which characterised the immediate object of her affection. In her simplicity she imagined him as merely tendering good offices, and that the token he was desirous of presenting was the little ring from Sandford, without which she had faithfully promised not to quit the castle.

“I do most earnestly implore you not to withhold the precious token from me for a moment,” cried Emmeline, in beseeching tones. “It is dear beyond all my possessions, and would convey a joy already bursting within my aching breast. I should be breaking the most solemn of vows were I to accede to your request without it. If conscious of its influence over me, you

would never subject my beating heart to this protracted suspense.”

“I did not deem it possible that my words could produce so startling an emotion,” answered De Meudon. “You cannot be in ignorance of my desires ; the assurances of your uncle forbid such an imagination. Here is the token in its outward form ; but its inward grace is hidden within the recesses of my heart. Though trifling in value, it conveys the sacred promises of deep affection, the pledge of my protection even to the sacrifice of life, while its acceptance will complete the joys I have so long and anxiously awaited.”

While uttering these sentiments, he endeavoured to place in the lady’s hand a small article of vertu, far greater in pecuniary value than the one anticipated. Trembling from head to foot, she poured forth this exclamation—

“ Oh ! forbear ; in heaven’s name I implore you forbear ! I did not, indeed, expect to be called upon to endure this additional trial. Endeavour to forget that such a passion ever pos-

sessed your soul. I regard you deeply as a worthy friend; but urge me not beyond that sincere promise. If you really so esteem me, add not despair to the burden of my anguish."

"The regard shewn me as a friend have I ever appreciated," replied De Meudon. "Its recollections extend to the earliest years of a playful childhood. But as the frail mortals of this transient earth aspire to higher spheres of eternal existence, so my heart longs for closer ties of confidence and affection. It is as a lover, as a protector, that I seek to share these sorrows, and to participate in your innocent joys. Heaven forbid that I should add to an anguish which a few weeks of solitude has created in your girlish breast, like black clouds o'ershadowing the bright beams of a noon-day sun. But to remove their weighty pressure from so pure and tender a mind will be the constant end and purpose of my future life."

"Think not that a brief solitude has sufficed to cloud my heart with such profound grief,"

replied Emmeline. "At present you must rest content with the promise already received, or my life will be embittered by the recollection of our acquaintance. I beseech you to press the matter no further; there is a motive for my trouble that I cannot express."

"To its utmost extent have I already accepted the profession of your esteem," rejoined De Meudon. "If you are not prepared to regard me as your future hope, confide in me as a faithful friend. There must be a deeper cause for these trials than my weak penetration is able to unfathom.♦ Let it not lay a burdensome secret on your youthful mind, when open expression to one who can truly sympathise may relieve all fears, and calm the anxious beatings of a palpitating heart."

In the silent repose of night, and quieted by these friendly assurances, Emmeline poured forth to the young knight a full account of her sorrows. He was distracted with wonderment, and stood looking upon the bright stars which illumed the

blue vault of heaven, lost in solemn contemplation. With remorse at disclosures, appearing to crush his cherished hope, were mingled feelings of pity for the unhappy lady, the realisation of whose affection he deemed a stern impossibility. At last, aroused from the seeming stupor, he again addressed his fair companion in kind but manly accents.

“Much deploring the words just uttered by your fair lips, I am pleased that you have summoned resolution to honour me with your confidence. It is unfortunate that such an attachment has possessed your thoughts, while your uncle would never regard with favour an alliance to the almost possessionless descendant of a Saxon franklin. Matters of urgent importance require my presence in France for a few weeks, meanwhile lay these considerations seriously to heart, and I shall yet believe my hopes have not been indulged in vain.”

“I freely acknowledge the difficulties that beset my fortunes,” rejoined Emmeline. “Nothing

can efface the sincerity of a devoted love, no idle fancy of my troubled brain. Admiration of his genius has overpowered all obstacles of traditional pride; and, truly grateful for invaluable service, the deepest affection would be but a trifling recompense."

"Conscious of my own inferiority, I freely acknowledge the young man's intellectual capabilities," answered De Meudon. "All of us are, or ought to be, sensible of important services afforded at some trying period of our lives; but you attribute to gratitude a claim, which, if founded on justice, would render it difficult to determine where our affections are rightly due. Many others, even so poor an individual as myself, may yet earn a similar reward of your thankfulness; for, doubtless, you will still encounter great dangers in these restless times. I will not detain you longer from your customary devotions. Weigh my feeble words deeply in your inward thoughts, and I may yet reach the proud position to which my soul aspires."

Departing to seek the solitude of her chamber, Emmeline simply negatived this last proposition by a slight shake of the head, though offering no determined resistance, when the young Knight implanted a tender kiss on her fair forehead. Scarcely believing what he had heard, though not doubting the lady's sincerity of heart for a moment, he continued to pace the battlements upwards of an hour before recovering from agitation caused by the recent scene. Manly pride prevented any thought of furthering selfish objects by working on the prejudices of Savoy ; so, comforting himself with an assurance that the fair one would reconsider her determination, he quickly regained his usual elasticity of spirits. When descending from the lofty heights he stepped through a long corridor, and was charmed by the sweetest strains of a melodious voice.

When Lady Emmeline retired to her private apartments, some time was spent in invocations to the Holy Mother for support and guidance. Her thoughts reverting to the interview with De

Meudon, she felt that relief experienced by a bursting heart, after uttering grief to one worthy of confidence ; and though her respect for the young Knight was more enhanced by the few serious moments lately spent in his society than by months of his pleasant gaiety, still her inward devotion wandered to a far distant object, the occurrence of that eventful evening passing away as a nightly dream is lost in busy scenes of active life. While her attendants were making the necessary preparation for repose, she caught up a little instrument, and, supported by its delicate notes, chanted forth the following ditty to a slow, but impressive melody, entirely unconscious of the attentive listener standing without the massive door :—

In distant climes, though now condemned to roam,
His manly shape that once endeared this home,
In fond remembrance haunts my weary way ;
With cherished hope through shining beams of day,
Dearest, I see thee still.

But daylight fades, hark to the curfew's knell,
My vesper prayers soon bid the world farewell ;
In slumber weary, restless, I recline,
Sweet nightly vision behold in dreams divine,
Dearest, I see thee still.

By trust in heaven, I oft allay my fears—
Oh ! could his cruel foes be moved by tears ;
For happy hours I fondly long in vain,
While fancy's eye doth yet thy form retain,
Dearest, I see thee still.

For some moments the good youth remained still and silent, anticipating a further expression of sentiment, imparted by the graceful influence of music's power, when, as though moved by sudden impulse, he rushed into an adjoining room, seized a small lute and poured forth a light and cheerful song, the gay occupants of the great hall suspending their festive sports to listen to the firm tones of his manly voice, which echoed through the vaulted passages :—

Sweet is that face, how mutely I adore,
Then wandered my eye its charms to explore ;
Blithely I touched the light strings of my lute,
The maiden she blushed, looked doleful and mute,
In grief to atone for the past ;
And still in dismay,
Spending the long day,
Like a lily bowed in the blast.

Gentle the moonbeams, the winds to a breeze,
Are hushed in the night, while I on my knees
Pour forth my soft words in speech and in song,
And for a faint sigh, with anguish I long ;
But alas ! like sound to a gale,
No rapture of joy,
The maiden is coy,
I whispered in vain a love tale.

If others must woo, in fortune so poor,
My lot I lament, a sad troubadour ;
Ne'er was the love of one so adored
Beguiled by a song, or won by the sword,
While looks a deep sorrow impart ;
Still music shall glide,
Though beauty doth chide,
So dotingly fond is my heart.

This little episode duly concluded to satisfaction, De Meudon joined in the merry pastimes of the evening with all his accustomed cheerfulness. His meditations that night were of a very mixed character. Scarcely willing to receive Emmeline's confession as positive truth, he could not avoid an effort to persuade himself that she was merely endeavouring to put some test on the fidelity of his intentions ; and awaking in this frame of mind, he regarded the occurrence of the previous night almost as an imaginary vision. Struck with the pleasing reception which awaited him, when again encountering the fair lady's smiles, and still more deeply gratified by the warm cordiality of her parting adieus, he set sail for the kingdom of France at an early hour on the following morning, and was wafted swiftly across the briny sea by the impulsive force of a northern breeze.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ Oh ! that the slave had forty thousand lives,
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge ;
I would have him nine years a killing.”

SHAKESPEARE.

It was not without considerable misgivings that Rochfort de Vere, after marshalling his followers into suitable troops, set out upon the rustic journey from the old city to the retreat of Dunsmore. After forwarding two parties by circuitous routes, he took a more direct course, under the guidance of a stranger well acquainted with the wild tracks of sylvan waste through which it was requisite to pass.

Already thwarted in avaricious enterprises the Lord's countenance wore a gloomy and disappointed aspect. He answered any remarks with snappish petulance, creating prejudice in the mind of the stranger, while enforcing on his own retainers the silence inspired by dread, his haughty demeanour towards inferiors always causing a distant reserve, which coarse liberties, given during customary revels at Hurstingham, did not suffice to efface. So strikingly did this temper characterise the imperious Baron's bearing during the journey, that a considerable portion of the forest was traversed in unbroken silence, until the guide, a plain-spoken, honest man, determined, at all risks, no longer to stifle the expression of inward thoughts.

"Sad times these for poor folk," said the guide, "who receive naught but disdainful looks for our service. My noble Lords, since Leicester's success, so eager for spoils, despise our wrongs. To satisfy burning thirst, could I empty a cup to our noble Prince, may he soon restore

the fortunes of our unhappy country, and cheer your lordly countenance."

"You do your country a serious wrong," replied Rochfort. "Keep the expression of such sentiments within thy teeth until they are asked. I am unaccustomed to hear my faults recapitulated in sinister insinuations, especially from a despicable menial. The duty of your hire is guidance to Dunsmore; no more is required of thee but silence and respect."

"There is no offence in a man enjoying his own ideas," answered the guide, "or in being thirsty after three hours' riding. While I seek to satisfy the cravings of appetite by returning to Winchester, my Lord's ingenuity will, doubtless, lead him to Dunsmore, where he can obtain fresh guidance at his further pleasure."

Seeing that the good man was about putting his threat into execution, Rochfort soon found it worth while to be a little more civil. In the complications of the wood, he was in fact totally at the menial's mercy, who rarely failed to make

a discreet use of such advantages, for profit and extortion.

“Peace to thine impudence,” said the Knight, “take additional reward for thy service, and a cup to keep thee in temper. It would little serve the Prince’s cause were a hundred such serfs drowned in Malsey. Lead us forthwith to some fair bank affording suitable halt to refresh both man and beast, for I trow we are yet some hours distant from the object of our search.”

“We are yet four hours’ ride from Dunsmore,” rejoined the guide. “A short digression will take us to Blackpool; there I stayed to rest the weary steeds, when before conducting my Lord’s servants through these woods.”

“And how came you aware that the slaves were my servants?” replied Rochfort, “and to what place did you conduct them in safety?”

“By the green jerkin that encompassed their bodies, I recognise my Lord’s servants,” said the guide. “It was a pretty lady we brought from the Priory, doubtless now the object of my Lord’s

pleasure. The second cup shall pledge her health and happiness, if not repugnant to your honourable conscience."

"Concern not thyself with the qualms of another man's conscience," answered the Knight, "but if you anticipate my guerdon tell me where did you quit the fair lady?"

"At the stone outside the King's Gate," said the guide, "before I met my lord riding swiftly on the grey charger."

"You seem a dreamer of strange tales," answered Rochfort; "I never saw thy sunburnt face before yesternight, nor hath a grey charger carried my weight for these five long years."

"Then it was some valiant knight in a scarlet mantle, who rode away with the lady, accompanied by a knave, wearing the green jerkin."

Doubtless the trusty guide would have afforded some further explanation had he not been interrupted by Rochfort, whose perception began to solve the mysterious problem. He soon silenced further conversation with an harangue, which

echoed the loud tones of his sonorous voice through the wild forests.

“Let that vile and banished stripling beware how he encounters the lion’s wrath, or his worthless life is fairly sped. While that wretched slave, who has dared to accept the bribes of his master’s foes, shall have the skin stripped from his flesh nine times over, one death is too little for my revenge. I would that, like the reptiles, that hound had fifty lives, every one should be tormented out of him before my savage and exulting sight.”

Before this outburst of passion was fairly spent, the party arrived at the desired halting place. It was a small pool of clean water, approached by a delving bank, where the short wood had been hewn away for the purpose of reaching the water with greater convenience. Several thick stemmed oaks, which in that moist season had developed their leafy clothing, while the ash was yet a bare and naked skeleton, spread the shadow of their extended arms over

the refreshing greensward. Here nature's carpet was relieved by the brightening hues of numerous wild flowers that sparkled with pearly dewdrops, yet undispersed by the hidden rays of a clouded sun. Here the potent cup passed swiftly round to moisten an ample repast of goodly viands.

While the servants were satisfying the craving of hunger and the animals drunk copiously from the clear water, the noble lord spent the interval of rest in quiet reflection, which served to calm his embittered soul. His first idea was to issue instant orders for return to Winchester, but second thoughts prompted a different plan of operations. Vainly conjecturing that the lady had fairly decamped with the despised youth and that the Prior would still have the same influence with the Lord of Pevensel, he thus reasoned in mistaken confidence. "It will be easy for the Holy Father to persuade Savoy that his niece escaped from care, and recovering possession of the fair prize, I may yet secure a triumph over the despicable stripling, who shall soon pay the

penalty of his crimes." In this determination he continued the journey, reaching Dunsmore about noontide.

On arriving at the Priory, immediate enquiries were made for the holy man who presided in that establishment. On attempting to cross the stone flooring of the sacristy to receive his guests, suddenly the old Prior staggered into the arms of two subordinate priests. A livid purple tinted his cheeks, followed by ghastly pallor, that alternated with hectic flushes of crimson. Senseless to all material objects his unconscious fear was succeeded by stupor, and stupor by incoherent ejaculations; then his eyes were closed by that glassy film which obscures the vision of men on the brink of dissolution, oft affording a brief imagination into eternal mysteries. With startled shrieks of wild alarm he beheld demons of darkness and lost souls enduring the terrors of Purgatory, when with imploring accents he entreats but one momentary glimpse at joys awaiting those who die a righteous death. Now

screaming in agony he exclaims, "Oh merciful Heaven, torment not my agonised conscience by the sight of such holy blessings, yea rather let me fall a martyr to my crimes and sink into utter corruption than behold visions so burdensome to a guilty soul." Foremost amongst the heavenly choir, chanting hymns of praise with well strung lyres, there stood the angelic form of the old Knight's daughter in the purity of virgin innocence. But all is now darkness, the old man sleeps on a couch surrounded by the flickering glare from numerous lights, his cold and lifeless form enveloped in a misty haze of burning perfumes.

When the confusion occasioned by this event had somewhat subsided, Rochfort gave way to a violent and profane exhibition of passion, which made the sacred walls ring with unaccustomed sounds. No longer could the truckling subservience of the old ecclesiastic be made a tool for his nefarious purposes. But it was not probable that so iron a will would rest satisfied under one

or two defeats, whether inflicted by human ingenuity or the direct will of heaven. A mind so brutally insensible to any object but the gratification of its own passion would be stirred to still deeper intrigues, followed by force and lawless violence, for which such unsettled times afforded fitting opportunity, when all who possessed authority were indifferent to anything that did not concern their own aggrandisement and gain.

Perceiving that his new scheme was snapped asunder before developing its first bud, the enraged Baron awaited in gloomy silence the arrival of his remaining followers. Then setting forth with many curses on the ill-fortune attending his undertaking, he returned to Hurstingham to contrive some determined and revengeful measures.

CHAPTER XX.

“ There passed a weary time ; each throat
Was parched and glazed each eye—
A weary time ! a weary time !
How glazed each weary eye—
When looking westward, beheld I
A something in the sky.
At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist ;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape I wist.
A speck, a mist, a shape I wist !
And still it nearer and neared ;
As if it dodged a water sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.”

The Ancient Mariner.

INFLUENCED by motives of revenge and lust, Rochfort de Vere long and vainly watched an opportunity to execute some plan of violence, but Lady Emmeline remained closely guarded

by the strong walls of Pevensel, baffling his utmost efforts. Sandford was yet a wandering outcast in the Welch mountains, closely haunted by the agents of the Knight of Hurstingham, his lady fair still pouring forth her secret though earnest prayers for safety ; while De Meudon was detained in Flanders, owing to the disruption of the Queen's levies. Thus the time passed away, until the blazing heat of summer suns had given place to winter's hoary frost.

How often are the greatest results attained from trifling incidents. Even a wandering beggar may be made an instrument in the hands of Providence to work some good purpose which the wealthiest noble or the most intellectual philosopher in the land have failed to accomplish.

The night was cold and bleak ; so mightily grew the tempest. An unlucky vessel, as if impelled by unseen power, rolls madly forward to the rocks of destruction ; shrill cries of desperation are drowned by rushing winds and mighty

breakers of lashing foam. The wildest hope seems gone. Despair has given place to calm and happy resignation, while, with bended knee, all join in utterance of prayer, imploring protection for their mortal bodies, or that their souls may be received into that heavenly haven, where neither wrecks from the power of the great deep or from the miseries of human wickedness can mar the blessings of eternal peace. Another fearful crash and the good ship lies stranded on the stony beach, nearly all its living freight being saved through timely exertion. Again a piercing shriek comes from the breaking vessel. Then a brave youth plunges into the foaming surge, and, safely landing a black-eyed hag, he swiftly conveys her battered form to the Castle of Pevensel.

When the first consternation caused by this event had somewhat subsided, and the vessel had gone to pieces in the fury of the storm, the old creature was sufficiently restored to engage in active conversation with her rescuer, the faithful

Conisburgh, who had already been an humble instrument in the deliverance of Lady Emmeline. Gaunt and bony in stature the stranger, by name Margot, had witnessed the passage of three score summers. Her bold features, with aquiline nose, exhibited the decaying relics of former good looks; short, curly locks still maintaining their sable hues, while a loud and masculine voice uttered sounds which seemed to inspire a listener with wonder, if not with dread. Such was the strange specimen of humanity with whom the young man thus became acquainted.

“You will reap but little reward by saving a desolate old beggar from a watery grave,” said Margot. “Still you have done a friendly part, and thanks are all I can offer but service, if the assistance of such an old sinner is worthy of consideration.”

“I do not desire a deeper requital than you have already bestowed,” replied Conisburgh; “but tell me the name of the vessel, and from whence ye come?”

“Harkye, young man,” answered Margot, “in a good ship bound from France to England’s shores, my son engaged as seaman; I myself, hiding in safe seclusion under the bulky stores, when suddenly we were boarded by some of these Cinque Port pirates, who, after ransacking the prize, sunk her in the deep waters of the Channel. In the confusion I escaped, finding fresh concealment in the hostile vessel, and stumbled in my passage o’er the dead body of my murdered offspring. Then heaven, in vengeance, sent the angry wind, which cast the distracted bark on this stony shore; but even that calamity shall not shield the owner from the rigour of my vengeance.”

“How marvellously chance has preserved you through such dangers,” said Conisburgh. “But what further projects of retribution occupy your mind; the waves will not again rise in obedience to your commands.”

“Speak not of chance, it is what fate has decreed,” replied Margot. “Now listen to the

utterance of prophetic sounds. Be it remembered that but fourteen summers have passed since the moon, shining with red and swollen light, caused the wind-driven sea to flash with luminous fire. Then rose the roaring ocean until men's hearts were terrified with dismay. Distracted mariners in vain endeavoured to save their sinking vessels, when in anger at our country's cruel wrongs, the encroaching waves nearly swallowed old Winchelsea's tottering walls. Once again, on the eve of St. Agath, shall the mighty sea threaten destruction to this inhospitable coast. Then, in more peaceful times of smiling liberty, will the raging waters retire from these broken shores, and render useless the briny retreats of such sinful pirates."

"For my part I would dispense with this prophetic chatter," rejoined Conisburgh. "Let the future take thought for itself. Once again, who was the owner of yonder wreck—the object of your unrelenting passion—let us hear it briefly, before the whole day is wasted in vain conjecture."

“ You seem an impatient stripling,” replied Margot, “ an unwilling listener to doleful prediction ; but as sure as death came into the world, so will destruction o’ertake these marauders.”

“ Did man ever hear a straightforward tale from an old woman’s lips ?” interrupted Conisburgh. “ I beseech you speak the name of this owner ; I am already able to hazard a guess, it is my resolute desire to aid thy revengeful projects.”

“ You speak well, and soon shall your purpose be put to the proof,” replied Margot. “ The slaves were but the servants of a noble knight, who employed them for objects of plunder, the name oft fell on my attentive ears—it is Rochfort de Vere, whose destruction shall be the aim and object of my future life.”

“ As a deliverer, you could render me no greater service,” answered Conisburgh. “ Follow that knight’s footsteps at every turn, and keep me in constant knowledge of his movements. His career of infamy will yet be ended by some well-

deserved measure, but keep this a secret in your own breast, especially within these walls."

"Rely on me, and heaven grant the fulfilment of my vows," said Margot, with sagacious look. "But what assurance have I that you, a menial servant, can accomplish these desired ends."

"Do not imagine it rests upon me," replied Conisburgh, "I am in constant communication with a noble youth, now compelled to seek a refuge in the mountains of Wales, through the artifice of that same tyrant. Could we but feel certain of his villainous haunts, soon should ruin be his lot."

"Then this wreck did truly foreshadow his further disasters," said Margot. "Now do I behold something in the western skies like a dark cloud rising over the dismal mist. Its shape doth speak of mighty battles, to which the elements will add the fury of their wrath, when tyrants shall lay mouldering on the fatal field, the red gore flowing as rain in the street."

"Indulge what flights of imagination you

please," answered Conisburgh, "nevertheless, with to-morrow's light depart upon thy undertaking. No longer a wandering beggar, your needs will be amply supplied. That hoarse signal doth summon to the evening meal, say no more of our conversation than secrecy will warrant, nor let backwardness of expression raise curiosity to mar our schemes."

With this caution, Conisburgh conducted his singular companion to the old hall, where they joined the assembled company. The usual evening games were entirely suspended. The eccentric peculiarities of the new guest afforded sufficient diversion. Throughout the evening numerous were her prophecies of coming events, nor was there any lack of credulous swains ready to place a superstitious reliance on these shadowy utterances. The burning embers of an expiring fire already extinguished, and the flaming torches ceasing to afford their sombre light, the wondering servants retired to their rest. On the follow-

ing morning the sunburnt countenance of old Margot was seen crossing the levels surrounding the Castle. She had started on her important mission, utterly unconscious of the influence she was destined to exercise on the future fortunes of the greatest in the land.

CHAPTER XXI.

“I will not back,
I am too high born to be propertied,
To be a secondary at control,
Or useful serving man or instrument
To any sovereign state throughout the world.

King John.—Act 5, Scene 2.

HUNTED like the wild deer, from dewy mountains to the lonely glen, thence to thick covers of bosky retreat, a wandering outcast was hotly pursued by treacherous foes. In desperation he sought refuge with a noble cavalcade which passed the course of his flight. In the midst of this powerful band was a withered ecclesiastic, whose

fatherly ear had received confessions from many confiding souls, his lips pouring forth comforting absolutions, until the iron hand of Time stamped furrows on his aged cheeks.

This worthy patriarch was surrounded by several junior priests ; but it was evident, from the length of the train, and from gaudy banners, which added lustre to its puissant and imposing appearance, that the adventurer had now before him the escort of some noble individual, in power and importance scarcely inferior to royalty itself. So closely had pursuers gained on the jaded horse which carried the flying youth, that cross-bow shafts fell closely around his path, when, deeming it impossible to become the prey of deeper enemies than the servants of Rochfort de Vere, the young man dashed boldly into the cavalcade, close to the reverend father. His dreaded foes immediately retreated, thinking he had gained the shelter of friendly protection. The startled agitation of the aged man manifestly

apparent, Sandford forthwith addressed him with that pleasant candour which rarely fails to produce a pleasing impression.

“I beseech my reverend father to afford his holy guidance to a wandering traveller lost in the dreary wilds of these rugged glens. Neither will thy venerable care be extended to unfaithful trespassers, or afford reason for regret at the exercise of so kindly an office.”

“Peace be unto thee, my child,” replied the priest. “Heaven forbid I should give stones to those who ask bread. If thou art a true and loyal youth, the greater thy welcome; but I am no harbourer of Leicester’s spies.”

“Your holy words have at once dispersed my fears,” rejoined Sandford. “A faithful servant of our Prince, I have just escaped the hands of his bitter enemies, for whose destruction my service is ever at command.”

“They are godless men,” answered the priest, “who deprive Mother Church of her just dues,

and appropriate to their own advantage the wool which formed our chief revenues.”

The old man had that eye to business common to the priesthood in this age, when flourished that venerable vendor of Yarmouth bloaters, the Abbot of St. Albans. His commercial prosperity had seriously deteriorated through proceedings by Leicester’s partizans, who claimed to themselves a monopoly of that staple commodity in which the old father’s transactions had hitherto been extensive and flourishing.

“I doubt it not,” replied Sandford. “They are cruel and selfish oppressors. These are moments of peril, requiring the effort of every strong arm to defeat the treason of designing usurpers. But may I ask your reverence to name the lordly baron with whom we march?”

“It is Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester,” said the holy man, “whose goodly forces give us safe conduct to Wigmore. Nor need so trusty a

subject as thyself fear to travel under the protection of his illustrious banner."

It was with very mingled feelings that Sandford heard this announcement. Gloucester, a leading member of Leicester's faction, was not less powerful than that more grasping baron. The young fugitive was, therefore, in doubt whether strife had arisen between the noble lords, or what was equally possible that he had but escaped one foe to become the prey of another, though perhaps of a less brutal and revengeful spirit. It was not long before he ventured to hazard some further enquiry on the subject.

"I crave pardon of my venerable father for any seeming importunity," answered Sandford. "On the fatal field of Lewes, my noble Lord of Gloucester fought side by side with the usurping Earl; where, therefore, is that security for a loyal follower of the Prince of which I have already received your venerable assurance?"

"In the vengeance of uncontrollable resent-

ment," returned the Priest, " my noble protector would lack the soldier's heart, by submitting to the overbearing contumely of rapacious equals, denying even rightful claims, and thereby provoking my lord's hostility. But I will deal openly with thee. These guards, suspicious of thy intentions, will presently conduct you into my lord's presence, when from his own lips will come expressions of intended malice."

Scarcely had the holy father uttered these words before Sandford was seized by armoured warriors, and hurried before the Earl of Gloucester with uncourteous roughness, despite the assurance of his willingness to accompany them. On a rising mound in the midst of numerous retainers there stood the noble earl, a sullen frown clouding his rigid features. It denounced wrath and indignation to any guilty of the slightest presumption. The whole pageant was impressive, inspiring the young prisoner with apprehension that the Priest's conclusions were incorrect,

and a fear that his persuasive powers would fail to make impression on one so evidently prejudiced. When placed in the power of men inclined to such haughty sullenness, a state of mind generally produced by disappointment and vexation, it is invariably better to offer suitable replies to their arguments before advancing any of one's own. So thought Sandford on this occasion. He waited in silence to hear what accusations the noble lord might have to bring against him.

“Thou prying knave,” said Gloucester, “does thy audacity even exceed the ingratitude of your master, whose ambition breaks all ties of kindred, seeking to reduce his equals to mere propertied instruments of selfish projects? Know that I am too high to be a secondary in the government of this powerful State. Go, tell your all-assuming lord that spies, daring to enter our ranks, will meet the destruction he himself deserves.”

“My lord is not so deeply possessed by anger but what he will suffer an honest man to speak,” replied Sandford. “I am no servile slave of any usurping lord. A victim to the oppressor, now an object of your present wrath, I should be a ready helpmate in any revengeful project, consistent with manliness and a noble spirit.”

“I hold no conference with nameless strangers,” replied Gloucester. “Think not to hoodwink my just resentment by adding deception to roguery. Be thankful that foolish mercy prevents the infliction of punishment on one so abusing my hospitality and license.”

“My lord is discomposed without occasion,” rejoined Sandford. “I am a true and honest franklin, a devoted servant of my Prince, in whose cause have I dared to remain on England’s shores, when degrading banishment was my pronounced sentence. Pursued by my lord’s enemies, though his former friends, I sought refuge by surrendering to these guards, and now

claim only an honourable imprisonment, until I prove the fidelity of my words."

"I have already been subject to the deepest injuries," returned Gloucester. "If you utter the words of truth, I will at once avail myself of your assistance in an enterprise to release the Prince, but I must have an earnest of good faith. Name some noble and loyal lord who can vouch for your trustiness, and remember that if your actions are but attempted machinations of vile imposture, your life is forfeited through such rashness."

"I have nothing further to ask from my noble lord," answered Sandford; "let man and horse bear a scroll to Peter de Savoy and you will soon be satisfied of my zeal in so agreeable a service; meanwhile I am content to remain under any restraint your prudence may deem necessary."

"So shall it be done," replied Gloucester. "You will remain under the care of officers until my further pleasure; if proved a true man you shall

receive the highest reward the grandest wish could desire."

The openness with which Leicester engrossed the control of the State, defying all former associates, excited envy and hatred in the mind of numerous Barons, and particularly of Gloucester. Already had this powerful nobleman unfurled the Royal Standard, anticipating support from the Welsh marches. The rival Earls opened a negotiation at the suggestion of mutual friends, but each party only strove to overreach the other. Leicester was already alive to the necessity of crushing his opponent, and fearing the popular cry for the restoration of the Prince to liberty, he began to be sensible that he had built the Castle of his greatness on a sandy foundation, and it required strenuous efforts to maintain himself on the giddy heights of nominal sovereignty to which he had climbed.

The decided tone in which Gloucester's last words were spoken left a most favourable impres-

sion on Sandford. He could not entertain the slightest apprehension but that Savoy, from motives of gratitude, would prove his friend, and hearing from present associates of the Prince's contemplated removal to Hereford, he hoped by some means to establish himself in the noble lord's confidence sooner than any communications could arrive from Pevensel. So greatly were the guards prepossessed by his urbanity and good grace that imprisonment soon became more nominal in restriction than real in terror, affording security from foes, who for months had constantly harrassed his daily path. Here for the present we leave the captive enjoying those blessings which can only be produced by hope,—may his long cherished desires be realized to the very letter.

CHAPTER XXII.

“How dangerous it is that this man goes loose,
Yet must we not put the strong law on him ;
He’s loved of the distracted multitude.”

Hamlet, Act 4.

IT is a common resource of Machiavelian contrivance to seek support from popular agitation, and pretended concessions, when the elements of power have no longer a reliable foundation in the countenance of the higher and more intellectual classes. Such was Leicester’s position at this moment. Rapacious covetousness was already doing its work. Numerous and powerful lords

who assisted to drag him to the zenith of his rule were now becoming his greatest enemies. Under the circumstances the Earl endeavoured to strengthen his sway by the first appeal to popular government which had yet been attempted. The cities and boroughs, previously too despised to be admitted to any share in the control of the State, were summoned to return two representatives to Parliament, though care was taken that their choice should be limited to partizans of the Earl. This period has commonly been called the epoch of the House of Commons.

But even so decided a step failed to accomplish its desired object. Further measures were necessary which had a more important influence on the course of our story. The cold winds of March were sweeping with their chilly blasts over the clear waters of Father Thames, when a noble assembly of lordly Barons graced the ample chamber of old Westminster's spacious hall. Here an important question awaited decision.

It was too dangerous an experiment to permit the Prince the full liberty of unrestrained freedom. Yet so much was he beloved by the populace whom it was now essential to conciliate, that appearance of concession was absolutely indispensable. Soon afterwards the noble heir to England's throne was brought from Dover and declared free in the presence of the assembled Barons, though he was never permitted to move unless accompanied by a large staff of Leicester's favourites. But the black cloud of a threatening storm was still lowering in the horizon of faction and discontent. Affairs were now becoming so critical that Leicester removed his quarters to Hereford, taking with him a numerous force, conveying the King and also the Prince, who, although permitted to take outdoor exercise, was closely watched under the irksome surveillance of continued restriction.

In the progress of this march to the ancient city, Leicester was engaged in close consultation

with his sons, FitzJohn, and some other important supporters, when a determined Baron demanded instant admittance to the conference. Such are the vicissitudes of human greatness, that a request, which, but a few weeks previously, would have been repelled with the scornful pride of arrogant assumption, was now submitted to as a necessity, conciliation being the only policy able to uphold the tottering fabric of falling power. Without the ceremony of further invitation, there entered Rochfort de Vere with a sarcastic smile of bitter resentment. His passion unexhausted, he came boldly to announce intended secession from the Earl's cause, but inward choler so choked these wrathful utterances that Leicester first addressed his former ally with those peculiar blandishments he was so capable of exercising, when suited to immediate interests.

“Come not into our presence with angry scowl,” said Leicester. “If conscience does not rebuke thy words, speak your demands, which

shall be conceded if not too exorbitant. But we give no listening ear to futile utterance of premeditated treachery; nor will any partaker in sedition and conspiracy find favour or admission to our councils."

"My requirements are not characterised by exorbitance, but by justice," answered Rochfort. "I will be no longer bearded by the taunts of avarice and power; I desire nothing but the faithful fulfilment of broken promises, which deny not, or my banner will soon wave amongst the forces arrayed for your destruction."

"We give no heed to the treasonous brawling of recreant Knights," said FitzJohn. "My Lord owes nothing to one who seized on a lordly domain without his knowledge or license. Retract your seditious words, or you quit not this conference except in the custody of my guards."

"I came not here to bandy words with pampered favourites," retorted Rochfort. "Silence would better become the enriched murderer of

despoiled Jews, whose coffers are doubtless replete with this ill-gotten plunder. It is with my Lord of Leicester that I desire to speak; nor will I be balked in my determination by the idle threats of subservient flatterers."

"Go hence, thou base utterer of false slander," replied FitzJohn. "Has the madness of indulgence so blinded your senses that you address an equal like the degenerate menials of your licentious household?"

"Peace, contentious Knights," interrupted Leicester, "and disturb not our deliberations by your worthless broils. This is no time for the discussion of petty misunderstandings. On you, Rochfort de Vere, we confer the noble possessions of Peter de Savoy, in the County of Sussex, which we declare forfeited; and it is our further pleasure that he should deliver into your hands the Castle of Pevensel, where we shall find fitting accommodation to receive our supplies from France."

“Am I thus to be jostled out of promised rewards to buy the support of wavering bannerets?” exclaimed FitzJohn. “Your faithful followers are thus discarded, to pander to the covetous desires of those dependents who mouth their treason before your very sight.”

“I should have imagined that the thirst of your avarice was already satiated,” answered Rochfort, whose countenance had now materially changed; “but need I repeat once more that my business is with my Lord, and my own ends served, it little matters how it may please his obsequious partizans.”

“I dare you to again provoke my anger by insolent ejaculations,” retorted FitzJohn. “Nor will I consent to forego one jot of conditions already proffered without ample equivalents. Let my Lord beware how, in buying one adherent, he loses another more potent and influential.”

“There is no need for this vain and empty

display of excitement," interrupted Leicester. "To you, FitzJohn, is reserved a still greater prize by a grant of possessions attained from the rebel Lord of Gloucester. Do let your selfish strife forthwith cease; nor tax me not again with ambitious schemes which seem the end and purpose of all your lives."

"I desire no more," said Rochfort; "but it deeply concerns me to know by what means I am to enforce on Savoy an instant compliance with your commands."

"My son will proceed with all the forces we can spare to undertake the siege," answered Leicester. "To these you can add what your influence can raise, and we will issue immediate orders for the City Militia to join the march."

As a matter of policy, the Earl suddenly broke up the stormy conference, while it was clearly evident that several Barons were about expressing their dissatisfaction at the favour shewn to

these two noisy supporters. But Leicester was in that position so common to every day life, when two evils presenting themselves, it becomes a necessity to chose the least. Still his decisions were but new grafts on the tree of disaffection, which did not fail to yield fruit in due season, four or five noble lords forsaking him, and were already marching to join the Royal banner unfurled under Gloucester's auspices.

Such was the course of action determined upon. Hastily collecting what means were at disposal, and accompanied by Simon de Montfort the younger, Rochfort returned to London. The valiant warriors started for Sussex, to seize the possessions fallen to the grasp of the Knight of Hurstingham, and then to commence offensive operations against the Castle of Pevensel; little doubting that its starving garrison would soon surrender, the fair lady becoming a victim to licentious greed. While these hostile proceed-

ings were in active preparation, Leicester continued his march to Hereford, with the intention of striking a decisive blow against the numerous forces who daily flocked to the standard of his desperate rival.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ In maiden confidence she stood,
Though mantled in her cheek the blood,
And told her love with such a sigh
Of deep and hopeless agony.”

SCOTT.

WHEN the final disruption of the Queen's levies no longer detained De Meudon in Flanders, he hastened back to Pevensel, hoping reflection might have influenced Lady Emmeline's mind more favourably towards him. But, unable to bear his presence, that anxious maiden retired into greater solitude, the pallid hue of a lovely

face proving how deeply concealed love was feeding on her damask cheek. These altered habits not only attracted the notice of the domestics, but even of Savoy himself, who began to be alarmed, imagining that some infidelity on De Meudon's part was the probable source of grief. Thus, influenced by more than ordinary feelings of affection, he determined to seek an interview with the fair lady, and to hear from herself the cause of this bitter anguish.

The lady's manner was somewhat abashed on the noble lord entering the apartment. But suddenly she rushed into his arms with many expressions of the purest affection, nor was her confusion lessened while her worthy guardian kissed away the tears which moistened her flushing cheeks. Both felt a consciousness that the confidence formerly existing between them was seriously impaired. The cause of this decaying unity it may naturally be supposed was well known to the lady, but the venerable noble, under

different impressions, was only able to draw imaginary conclusions in the wild wanderings of mysterious conjecture. He was at a loss to attribute a circumstance, causing him no little grief, to any shortcomings on his own part, except the sad error of judgment in committing his fair charge to the seclusion of Dunsmore's walls. In this frame of mind, he bid the attendants retire while he conversed alone with his agitated niece. An increasing tremor, when the servants withdrew, soon convinced the worthy Lord that her troubles were not the vain imaginations of a girlish breast, but some real cloud overshadowing her youthful brow with a profound sorrow, which, in all sincerity, he hoped to assuage.

“It gives me much concern to see your youthful heart so bowed with sorrow,” said Savoy. “For years it has been my constant care to promote your happiness. Your joys should I ever regard as the solace of my aged life. Deal with

me in that open confidence, with that absence of concealment, with which in by-gone days you spoke the little troubles of a childish mind. If the unhappy danger of Dunsmore's solitude has thus curbed your cheerful spirit, yet believe that, in all the sincerity of an anxious mind, I did but act as deemed the best."

"The devoted love I have ever entertained towards you would forbid me to regard it otherwise," answered Emmeline. "That dire affliction is happily past. It was but one of those many chastisements sent for a good and holy purpose, which, though for the time hard to bear, leave their influence on a godly mind, purifying its thoughts from unhallowed desires, and fitting the immortal spirit for higher spheres of eternal bliss."

"Then why treat me with a want of confidence?" replied Savoy. "Once my constant companion, now the solitude of repining grief seems to have a charm I can only impute to fear."

You do me a serious injustice by this backwardness and hesitation, unless I have given you cause, either real or imaginary, to doubt the truth of my affection."

"Do not so speak, my dearest protector!" cried Emmeline. "Let us not add to each other's trials by even the most distant suspicion of unkindness or disregard. I love you with that fond esteem which in early infancy alone can be implanted in the human soul; and fondly I hope and trust to do so, until, by heaven's will, the iron hand of death shall separate us in this worldly life."

"Your words have spoken comfort that I am scarcely able to express," returned Savoy; "but then I must seek further for the cause of these troubles. It now fills me with deep remorse that I suffered the affection that doubtless overpowers your mind to proceed without earlier interference; but tell me honestly, by the devotion you so openly express, in what manner has he vexed

your poor and innocent heart. If by any unfaithful act, or by any trifling backwardness he still prolongs suspense, to prove the purity of your love, confide in me, and you shall not have cause for regret."

Little believing her uncle could be aware of any love suit contemplated by De Meudon, Emmeline came to the immediate conclusion that by some means the attachment towards Sandford must have reached her guardian's knowledge. She felt there was no longer any necessity for those painful apprehensions that so gnawed the inward cords of her maiden bosom, like the fretting moth destroying a costly garment. Under the force of such mistaken sentiments, she spoke boldly and openly, though not without emotion far greater than any surprise could occasion.

"The whole cause of my fear is now gone," said Emmeline. "It is the cherished love I am utterly unable to control which weighs upon my

spirit, although imparting a pleasant joy that contending affections cannot efface. His genius, his energy of character, have inspired my confiding soul with admiration I cannot utter in words. But the devoted regard I have ever entertained is further enhanced by boundless gratitude for my deliverance from recent peril. Oh ! forgive me, I pray, for disguising these thoughts ; I have too long concealed my inward feelings."

" Surely my senses must deceive me," replied Savoy, much confounded and amazed by this communication. " You cannot allude to that banished youth whose fate is still involved in mystery. Dismiss at once a thought so impossible, or your affection is built on a quicksand, and my grey hairs bowed down with sorrow ; but speak again, for I cannot believe the reality of my conjectures."

" Do not say so !" exclaimed Emmeline, somewhat frightened, though her pure mind scorned to practise any deception. " He is more to me

than life itself. It is no wild vision of enthusiasm. The recollection of his charms is the only solace of these dreary hours. My dotting heart, without the influence of his manly precepts, is like the clouded sky deprived of the sun's bright radiance. His birth, though not of the proudest, still it has no degrading element to mar the compensation afforded by genius."

"That fatal error must be redeemed," said Savoy, with much emotion. "He will not long throw his love away upon you when he receives the expression of my resentment. On the score of gratitude you bestow one of the greatest gifts which Nature has placed in the power of a woman's soul, while you forget all obligations to another, who, from earliest hours of infancy, has nurtured you to be the comfort of his declining years. I cannot forget the pride of my forefathers, in which I glory, and vex me not by a repetition of such desires, or my failing strength will be brought to its end."

“ I implore you not to denounce me with such bitter words !” cried Emmeline. “ It cannot be pleasing to a righteous heaven that such prejudice should influence our actions. Be assured that resentment can but defeat its own object ; but God forbid that I should be the misery of your old age. My whole devotion shall be exercised to solace its remaining days ; nor do I see that the longings of silent affection can unfit me for so goodly an office.”

“ Nay, then, repeat the promise without its limit,” returned Savoy. “ For my sake, forget the past as a dream, as a fancy of an unsettled mind. Though I would fain be an object of your esteem, still you require the protection of a stronger arm. Think kindly of that fond youth now our worthy guest. His noble ancestors bled for their country’s cause, and such a union would prove that solace to my age which you desire to bestow.”

“ Oh ! urge me not further, I beseech you,”

answered Emmeline. "I know him to be a noble and stainless youth of good estate. I cannot doubt him as a virtuous knight. Though in manner too ostensive, yet a valiant and gracious person; still I cannot love him, which he well knows long since."

"These manners are but the freaks of youth, which a few years will suffice to soften," rejoined Savoy. "I implore you once more to renounce an idea that must place a deep chasm between our hearts, which has already opened its first chink. I am loath to utter one syllable of unkindness to so tender a mind, though I will spare no measures to prevent a consummation so violating the whole principles of my life."

"There is no necessity for apprehension," replied Emmeline. "I would rather end my days in the deepest seclusion than resort to any means degrading and dishonourable. It is difficult to conquer notions instilled in youth and cherished through the weary years of a prolonged

existence. The assurance already given might well satisfy as to my esteem towards you, and if my hopes are never to be realized, yet permit me to dote in silence on their adored object."

"Thou art a wilful and foolish girl," answered Savoy. "Now I leave thee to contemplate on the future, and to make a choice between two evils. By a compliance to my wishes, you will cause this heart an unspeakable joy, but by an obstinate adherence to impracticable schemes you will bring my shattered frame to a sorrowing death."

When the noble lord quitted her chamber the fair lady, after a passionate outburst of emotion, felt a calmness to which her mind had long been strange. In most of the unpleasant matters experienced during life, anticipation is generally worse than the reality, and although our direst fears may be the result of some long-dreaded occurrence, still, when it is past, there is a sense of comfort, mingled with the sorrow, often

producing a greater elasticity of spirits than had previously existed. For some time Emmeline felt a buoyancy she was unable to comprehend, until she remembered Sandford's words, when he spoke of the pleasure arising from a conscientious discharge of duty exceeding all gratifications that human nature can enjoy. She could hardly believe that the final doom was pronounced, blighting her most tender feelings. Come when it might, she was well aware that the first knowledge of her devotion would raise in her uncle's mind long-cherished prejudices. Still venturing to hope time would soften their virulence, in mental peace she left the issue in the hands of an unseen power, and determined to bear the result with holy resignation, however painful its decree.

But very different sentiments operated on the noble lord. Pride swelling within that haughty bosom, choked all the better feelings of his heart, even stifling the higher claims of justice itself.

And not only was this prevailing passion satisfied with crushing the brightest attributes of his nature, but it even roused those baser elements of the human mind, a desire for revenge, and animosity towards those from whom he had received no injury. He was sternly determined to get rid of an attachment, regarded as an impending blow on his noble house, even to the violation of Christian rectitude. He sought to betray the object of his wrath into the grasp of unrelenting foes should opportunity offer. This was the unhappy moment when a scroll was placed before him, announcing Sandford's restraint with the Earl of Gloucester, and requesting his good offices. All motives of conscience were overpowered, he despatched an answer disclaiming all knowledge of the adventurer, and even denouncing him as a probable spy.

Shortly after the messenger bearing this fatal document had quitted the ancient fortress, a commotion occurred within its walls of no

ordinary character, amply testifying that some event had happened of startling importance. Presently De Meudon, accompanied by a few principal officers, rushed into the chamber. He made a communication which caused the noble lord to stagger against the wall, and exhibited another scroll just sent across the drawbridge, not only forfeiting Savoy's possessions in Sussex, but commanding that he should forthwith deliver to Rochfort de Vere the Castle at Pevensel, hitherto regarded his peculiar stronghold.

END OF VOL. I.

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